THE COMPANION

OF THE TOUR OF FRANCE.

THE JOURNEYMAN JOINER;

OR,

THE COMPANION OF THE TOUR OF FRANCE.

BY GEORGE SAND.

TRANSLATED BY

FRANCIS GEORGE SHAW.

DUBLIN:
PUBLISHED BY JAMES M'GLASHAN,
21, D'OLIER STREET.

MDCCCXLIX.

INTRODUCTION.

A HISTORY of the secret societies which have existed from ancient times until now, would be a very interesting and a very useful work, but it is beyond our power. It has been attempted several times, but whatever may be the merit of the various labours undertaken upon this matter, they have not yet thrown any great light upon those mysterious associations in which so many important truths have been elaborated, mingled with so many strange errors.

Secret societies have hitherto been a necessity of the nations. Inequality prevailing in those nations, equality must necessarily seek darkness and mystery, in order to labour at its divine work. When the holy philosophy of Christianity was proscribed upon the Roman soil, it was obliged to hide itself in the catacombs.

It may be said that not a single injustice, not a single violation of the principle of equality is committed in human societies, but on the very instant, the germ of a secret society is thus implanted in the world, to repair that injustice and to punish that violation of equality. When the patricians of Rome sacrificed Tiberius Gracchus, he took a handful of dust and threw it towards heaven; that dust thus thrown towards heaven must have produced a secret society, a society of avengers who would labour in darkness at the work which was proscribed and martyrized in the light of day.

Why did the Roman empire fall, and why do empires fall, except because under the surface of public society existed obscurely all sorts of secret societies, which laboured noiselessly, and by degrees destroyed its foundations? The social edifice still stands and lifts its dome in air; a superficial observer thinks it durable and solid; but whether palace or temple, that edifice, sapped and undermined, will crumble at the first breath.

Historians have hitherto been too much like that super-

ficial observer, whose eye penetrates no deeper than the surface of things. How much pains they often take to dress up dead bodies! Why do they not rather employ themselves in penetrating the mystery of that which moves and lives within those bodies; in carefully studying that which, though to-day a principle of death to public society, will to-morrow be a principle of life to this same society? There are moments in the history of nations, when public society exists only nominally, and when there is nothing really living but the secret societies hidden in its bosom.

A large number of secret associations have only an ephemeral object, and become extinct almost as soon as they are formed, when the object is attained, or appears decidedly unattainable. Others have a persistency which causes them to last for centuries. That persistency, as well as that passing existence, depends upon the object which the adepts propose to themselves. But, whatever may be that object, and even when the principle of association is the broadest possible, the secret society, precisely because it is secret and proscribed, must inevitably fall away from the truth of its principle. It necessarily is the case, that it replies to intolerance by intolerance, to the selfishness of public society by an opposing selfishness, to the blind fanaticism which repels its ideas by a fanaticism equally blind. Thence is derived, in certain secret societies which history has recorded, though they are not as yet truly judged, the order of the Temple, for example, a double character, which has caused them to be attributed to the spirit of evil or to the genius of good, according to the aspect which writers have chosen to consider.

Such is the evil inherent in secret societies. But let open and allowed societies cease to accuse their rivals so bitterly for all the misfortunes which have befallen them; secret societies are the necessary result of the imperfection of general society.

Since the ancient rule of castes up to our age, in which everything tends to their final abolition, men have constantly attempted to construct true society. But society has always become caste, under whatever form it has been manifested in the world. Whoso says society, says association, and whoso says association, says equality; for there is no other principle that can unite two men, but the principle of reciprocity or equality. But society, always created with a view to, and by means of, the principle of equality, has always become oppressive and destructive of equality. This spirit of caste was a law of nature, a condition of existence in all the associations of the past. Of what consequence are names, of what consequence is it that society be called republic, monarchy, aristocracy, church, monachism, burgership, corporation, according

to place and time? So long as public society is not constructed with a view to human equality, public society will be caste; and so long as public society is caste, it will engender secret societies. It is for the future to realize the work which has so long been germinating in humanity, and which now ferments so energetically in its bosom; because it is for the future to sum up in a universal faith, in a universal unity, diversified only in its multiplied forms, all the scattered notions, all the incomplete manifestations of eternal truth. By the side of the great current followed by the principal social and religious ideas, obscure and small streams are formed, in infinite numbers, upon either bank. Great truths are moved to and fro in this concourse of tributaries, at one time repelled, at another absorbed by the parent stream. The idea must assume all forms, all directions, before being united with the ocean around which all the families of the future society will take up their abode.

Such appears to be the legitimation in the plans of Providence, of secret societies so violently anathematized by historians commissioned by the various tyrannies which have hitherto oppressed the world. In this manner they can be justified in principle without, therefore, attacking general society. Prevailing ideas having always engendered numerous sects, and public doctrine having always endeavoured to stifle particular doctrines, it is evident that every difference of opinion, whether in faith or in politics, must necessarily manifest itself in a secret society, awaiting the broad daylight, or the extinction of forgetfulness. Thence, I repeat, that multitude of obscure councils, of abortive conspiracies, of occult sciences, of schisms, and of mysteries, the monuments of which are still for the most part concealed in a subterranean world, if they be not buried there for ever. The discovery would nevertheless be very precious, if not on account of these things themselves, at least on account of the light which those that float upon the surface would receive from them. The affiliation which would be established between all secret societies would be a new key, with which to penetrate the recesses of history, and the great principles of truth would thence derive an immense authority. But it is very difficult, I acknowledge, to bring together the threads of this vast net-work. We find it difficult even to establish the true parentage of contemporaneous secret societies, such as Illuminism, Masonry, Carbonarism. There are others which, even now, prevail in all their vigour among a considerable portion of society, and the genealogy of which will be still more uncertain. I refer to the association of workmen under the generic name of *companionship—Trades-Unions.*

It is well known that a large portion of the labouring

classes are divided into different secret societies, not acknowledged by the laws, but tolerated by the police, and which take the title of *Devoirs* (Duties). Devoir, in this sense, is synonymous with doctrine. The great, if not the only doctrine of these associations, is that of the very principle of association. Perhaps originally, this doctrine, now isolated, was supported by a code of religious axioms of dogmas and symbols inspired by the spirit of the time. The various rites of these Devoirs go back, in fact, to the middle ages, according to some authorities; to the remotest antiquity, according to others. The symbol of the temple of Solomon is the principal one in most, as it also is in Masonry. Moreover, the necessity of forming themselves into a corporate body, and of maintaining the privileges of industry, may, in the earliest times, have given rise to these fraternal associations among the labouring classes. They may, for the same reason, have been perpetuated through the ages, and have transmitted, each to the other, a certain plan of organization. But diversity of interests produced secessions, and consequently differences in form. Moreover, the institutions of these societies have been affected by contemporaneous institutions. In some, nevertheless, certain texts of the ancient law have been preserved until now, and are found in the new regulations. Thus, the *Devoir of Solomon* prescribes, as a law of Solomon, that its adepts should go to church on Sunday. Many ancient Devoirs are *lost*, as the Companions say; that of the tailors, for example. Others have been formed since the French Revolution. Various bodies which, up to that time, had not been formed into societies, have adopted the titles, the signs and the customs of the ancient Devoirs. The latter repelled them, and even now, do not accept them all, attributing to themselves an exclusive right to bear the glorious insignia, and the sacred titles of their predecessors. The companionship confers upon the initiated a nobility of which they are proud and jealous to excess. Thence violent wars between the Devoirs, a whole epopœia of conflicts and conquests, a kind of church militant, a fanaticism full of heroic dramas and a barbarous poetry, of songs of war and love, of memorials of glory, and chivalric friendships. Each Devoir has its Iliad and its Martyrology.

M. Lautier published in Avignon, in 1838, an epic poem, very well conducted, respecting the persecutions, in the midst of which the Devoir of the shoemakers had sustained itself triumphantly. There are some very beautiful verses in this poem; which fact does not prevent the proletary bard from making excellent boots, and fitting his readers to their great satisfaction.

An entirely new literature might be created with the

manners of the people, so little known to the other classes. That literature has its origin in the very bosom of the people; it will come forth with brilliancy before long. It is there that the romantic muse will recover her strength, a muse eminently revolutionary, which, since her appearance in literature, is searching for her path and her family. In the strong race will she find that intellectual youth which is necessary to enable her to take her flight.

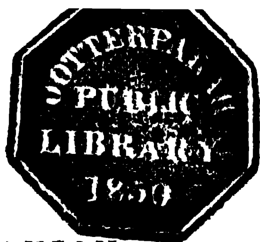
The author of the following story does not pretend to have made this discovery. If he be one of those who have foreseen it, he is no further advanced on that account, for he does not feel either young enough or strong enough to give an impulse to serious or popular literature, such as he conceives it. He has attempted to colour his picture with a reflection which can be seen, but which does not permit itself to be seized by weak hands. In tracing this sketch, he has become convinced of a truth, which he long since felt; which is that, in art, the simple is the greatest to attempt and the most difficult to attain.

Whatever merit and importance he may attribute to this work, the author thinks it his duty to declare that he derived the idea from one of the most interesting books he has met with for a long time. It is a little 18mo. entitled *the Book of the Companionship*, and recently published by Avignonnais-la-Vertu, journeyman joiner. This work, from which the *National* has extracted almost literally, without credit, in a *feuilleton* filled with new and curious details, contains all that an initiate of the Companionship could reveal without betraying the secrets of the doctrine. It was composed simply and without art, under the influence of the most healthy and the most upright ideas. The object of the writer was not to amuse idlers; he had one altogether more serious. For ten years his soul has been devoted to one idea, that of reconciling all the Devoirs among themselves, of putting a stop to their barbarous customs, their jealousies, their vanities, their battles. Insensible to the poetry of conflicts, endowed with an apostolic zeal, persevering, active, indefatigable, governed, and, as it were, assailed at every moment by the feelings of human fraternity, he has endeavoured to make his brothers, the Companions of the *Tour of France*, understand the beauty of the idea born in his breast. After having written his book, he started on a pilgrimage of five hundred leagues, during which he spread his idea and his feeling among all the workmen whom he could touch and convince. His evangelic mission has not been unsuccessful. In all parts of France he has awakened sympathies and formed bonds of friendly relation with the most intelligent adepts of the different industrial societies. A stranger to politics, and

pursuing without mystery the most exalted of enterprises, he assumed for his task the realization of the device of St. John: *Let us love one another.*

Under the influence of the same feeling, the *Companion** *of the Tour of France* has been written, or more properly, attempted. Some journals, too benevolent towards the author, and doubtless ill-informed, announced, instead of this novel, a complete work, an extended and important labour. The author of *Andre* and *Mauprat* declines. The task of writing the modern history of the proletary is too great for him, and he gives back the honour of the enterprise to those grave personages who wished to invest him with it.

* Compagnon means both Companion and Journeyman.



THE COMPANION

OF THE

TOUR OF FRANCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE village of Villepreux was, according to M. Lerebours, the most beautiful spot in the department of Loir and Cher; and the most capable man of the said village was, in the secret persuasion of M. Lerebours, M. Lerebours himself, when the noble family of Villepreux, which he represented, did not occupy their majestic and antique manor of Villepreux. In the absence of the illustrious personages composing that family, M. Lerebours was the only one in the village who could write orthography irreproachably. He had a son who was also a capable man. There was but one voice no this subject, or rather there were two—the father's and the son's—though the wits of the place did pretend that they were too honest people to have stolen the Holy Ghost between them.

There are few travelling clerks frequenting the roads of Sologne to offer their merchandise from chateau to chateau, few drovers going with their cattle and provisions from fair to fair, who have not, on foot, on horseback, or in stage-waggon, met, were it but once in their lives, M. Lerebours, steward, manager, intendant, right-hand-man of the Villepreux. I call to witness those who have had the happiness to know him: was he not a small man, quite dried up, very yellow, very active, at first sombre and taciturn, but by degrees becoming excessively communicative? The reason was, that when in company with strangers to the country, he was possessed with only one idea, which was this: Here are people that do not know who I am! Then came this second re-

flection, no less painful than the first: There are, then, people that can be ignorant who I am! And when those persons did not appear entirely unworthy to appreciate him, he added in conclusion: It is, nevertheless, necessary that these honest people should learn from me who I am.

Then he tried them upon the subject of agriculture, not hesitating, in case of need, to draw their attention by some enormous paradox; for he was a corresponding member of the agricultural society of his shire town, and he was by no means more proud on that account. If he succeeded in eliciting questions, he did not fail to say: I have tried that experiment upon our *estates.* And if asked respecting the quality of the soil, he replied: We have every kind; our estates are four leagues square; we have therefore dry, wet, moist, heavy, light, &c.

In Sologne one is not very rich with four leagues of land, and the estate of Villepreux produced no more than thirty thousand francs a-year; but the Villepreux family had two others of a smaller income, which were leased, and which M. Lerebours visited once a year. He had, therefore, a triple occupation, a triple importance, a triple capacity, and ever-lasting subjects of conversation and agricultural demonstrations.

When he had produced his first effect, as he wished nothing better than to be modest, and as the avowal of a high position is always rather difficult, he hesitated some moments, and then ventured the name of Villepreux; if his auditor was sufficiently impressed beforehand with the importance of that name, M. Lerebours said, casting down his eyes: I have charge of the concerns of *the family.* If that auditor was so much his own enemy as to ask what the family was, Oh, then, woe to him, for M. Lerebours undertook to inform him; and there were interminable genealogies, enumerations of alliances and misalliances, a list of cousins and second-cousins; and then statistics of the estates, and then a statement of the improvements effected by himself, &c., &c. When a diligence had the happiness to contain M. Lerebours, no jolts nor falls could disturb the delicious slumber into which he plunged the travellers. He entertained them with the Villepreux family from the first change of horses to the last. He would have gone round the world talking of *the family.*

When M. Lerebours went to Paris, he passed his time there very disagreeably; for, in that nest of mad-caps, nobody seemed to care for the Villepreux family. He did not understand why people did not salute him in the streets; or why, on coming out of the theatre, the crowd almost smothered, without ceremony, a man so necessary as he to the prosperity of the Villepreux.

It was of no use to ask him for moral data respecting *the family*, for distinctions between its members, or sketches of their different characters. Whether from discretion, or inaptitude for that kind of observation, he could say nothing of those illustrious personages, except that this one was more or less economical, or understood business better than that one. But the quality and importance of a man were measured, in his view, only by the number of crowns he was to inherit; and when asked if mademoiselle Villepreux was amiable and pretty, he answered by a computation of the value of her dowry. He could not understand how any one should be curious to know more.

One morning, M. Lerebours rose even earlier than usual—which was hardly possible, unless he rose, as they say, the day before—and, descending the principal and only street of the village, called *Rue royale* (Royal street), he turned to the right, entered a neat little lane, and stopped before a house of modest aspect.

The sun hardly began to gild the roofs, the barely awakened cocks crowed in falsetto, and the children in their shirts upon the thresholds, finished dressing in the street. Still the mournful sound of the plane and the sharp groaning of the saw already resounded in the workshop of father Huguenin; the apprentices were already at their posts, and the master already scolded them with a fatherly roughness.

'So early abroad, sir manager?' said the old joiner, raising his cap of blue cotton.

M. Lerebours made a mysterious and imposing sign. The joiner having approached:

'Let us go into your garden,' said the steward to him, 'I have important matters to speak about. Here, my head is broken; your apprentices seem to do it on purpose; they hammer as if they were deaf.'

They crossed the back-shop, then a small court, and entered an enclosure of fruit-trees, the flavour of whose fruit had not been corrected by grafting, nor their vigorous forms changed by the pruning knife; some thyme and sage, mingled with a few roots of pinks and gilliflowers, perfumed the morning air; a thick bushy hedge sheltered the promenaders from the inspection of curious neighbours.

It was there that M. Lerebours, redoubling his solemnity, informed master Huguenin, the joiner, of the expected arrival of the family.

Master Huguenin did not appear so much overpowered as he should have been in order to please the intendant.

'Well,' said he, 'that is your business, M. Lerebours; it does not concern me, unless there is some floor to raise, or some wardrobe to put in order.'

'There is a matter of much greater importance, my friend,' returned the intendant. 'The family have conceived the idea (I should say, if I dared, the singular idea) of having the chapel repaired, and I come to see if you are able or if you are willing to be employed.'

'The chapel!' said father Huguenin, quite astonished; 'they wish to restore the chapel? Well, that is very strange! I thought they were not devout; but it is necessary, it would appear, in these days. They say that the king Louis XVIII——'

'I have not come to talk politics with you,' replied Lerebours, frowning; 'I only wish to know if you are not too much of a Jacobin to work upon the chapel of the chateau and to be well paid by the family.'

'Oh, oh, I have already worked for the good God; but explain yourself,' said father Huguenin, scratching his head.

'I will explain in due season,' replied the steward; 'all that I can tell you is, that I have been directed to find skilful workmen either at Tours or at Blois. But if you are able to make the repairs I will give you the preference.'

This opening gave great pleasure to father Huguenin; but as a prudent man, and knowing well with what kind of a steward he had to deal, he was careful not to show it.

'I thank you heartily for having thought of me, M. Lerebours,' replied he; 'but I have a great deal of work on hand at this moment, you see! My business is good, and I do all the work of the district, because I am the only one of my trade. If I should undertake the work of the chateau, I should dissatisfy both town and country, and a new joiner might be called in who would take away all my custom.'

'Still it is a good job to put into your pocket in a year—in six months perhaps—a good round sum in cash. I don't doubt you have a large custom, master Huguenin, but all your customers don't pay.'

'Excuse me,' said the joiner, wounded in his democratic pride, 'they are all honest people, who order only what they can pay for.'

'But who do not pay quickly,' returned the steward with a malicious smile.

'Those who delay,' replied Huguenin, 'I am quite willing to give credit to. We can always have an understanding with our equals; and I also sometimes make them wait for my work longer than I could wish.'

'I see,' said the steward calmly, 'that my offer does not tempt you. I am sorry to have troubled you, father Huguenin;' and, raising his cap, he pretended to be going, but slowly; for he knew well that the mechanic would not let him depart thus.

In fact, the conversation was renewed at the end of the alley.

'If I knew exactly what was wanted,' said Huguenin, affecting an uncertainty which he did not experience: 'but perhaps it is above my powers—it is old wainscotting; in old times they worked more finely than now—and the pay was doubtless in proportion to the pains. Now we have to work more time and get less pay. We have not always the necessary tools—and then the nobility are less rich, and therefore less magnificent—'

'That is not always the case with the family of Villepreux,' said Lerebours, drawing himself up. 'I take that upon myself, and I think I have never wanted workmen when I wished to get anything done. Well, I must go to Valençay. There are good joiners there, I am told.'

'If the work was merely of the nature of the pulpit, which I fashioned last year for the parish church—' said the joiner, adroitly referring to the excellent job he had executed the preceding year.

'It will perhaps be more difficult,' returned the intendant, who had carefully examined the parish pulpit on the day before, and who knew very well that it was without fault.

And as he was still going, father Huguenin decided to say to him:

'Well, M. Lerebours, I will go and see that wainscotting; for, to tell you the truth, it is so long since I have been there, that I do not remember very well what it is.'

'Come, then,' replied the steward, who became more reserved in proportion as the other became persuaded; 'looking costs nothing.'

'And binds to nothing,' replied the joiner. 'Well, I will go, M. Lerebours.'

'As you please, master,' said the other; 'but remember that I have not a day to lose. In order to obey the commands of the family, I must come to some conclusion this evening, and if you have not done the same, I shall go to Valencay.'

'The devil! you are in a great hurry,' said Huguenin, quite moved, 'well, I will go to-day.'

'You had better come at once, while I have time to accompany you,' returned the impassive steward.

'Let us go then, so be it!' said the joiner. 'But I must take my son! for he knows how to make a draft at sight; and as we shall work together——'

'But is your son a good workman?' asked M. Lerebours.

'Even if he were not so good as his father,' replied the joiner, 'does he not work under my eyes, and according to my orders?'

M. Lerebours knew very well that the younger Huguenin was a very desirable person to employ. He waited for the two mechanics to put on their vests and to furnish themselves with square, rule, and pencil. After which the three started, saying little, and each keeping on the defensive.

CHAPTER II.

Pierre Huguenin, the master joiner's son, was the handsomest youth for twenty leagues around. His features had the nobleness and regularity of statuary; he was large and well made in person; his feet, hands, and head were very small, which is remarkable in a man of the people, and very compatible with great muscular strength in handsome races; finally his large blue eyes, shaded by black eyelashes, and the delicate colouring of his cheeks, gave a gentle and pensive expression to that head which would not have been unworthy of Michael Angelo's chisel.

What will appear singular, and what is nevertheless positively true is, that Pierre Huguenin was not conscious of his beauty, and that neither the men nor the women of his village had any more idea of it than he. The reason is not that in any class man is born devoid of the sense of the beautiful, but that this sense needs to be developed by the study of art and the habit of comparison. The free and cultivated life of persons in easy circumstances brings them incessantly into the presence of master-pieces of art, or into relation with types which they see appreciated about them by the spirit of criticism diffused throughout society. Their judgment is thus formed; and were it only from the contact of contemporaneous art, which, poor or flourishing, always preserves a reflection of eternal beauty, they open their eyes without effort to an ideal world, upon the threshold of which the repressed genius of the poor man beats for a long while, and is too often broken without being able to penetrate.

Thus the first labourer, with a bright complexion, broad shoulders, and a quick eye, had more success in the village fêtes, and made the girls laugh and dance more than did the noble and calm Huguenin. But the citizens' ladies looked after him, saying, 'Mon Dieu! who is that handsome young man?' And two young painters who passed through the village of Villepreux on their way to Valençay were so struck by the beauty of the joiner's apprentice, that they requested

his permission to take his portrait; but he refused quite drily, thinking the request a poor joke on their part.

Father Huguenin, who was himself a superb old man, and who did not lack good sense, had not always perceived the high intelligence and ideal beauty of his son. He saw in him a well-built youth, industrious and quiet, a good assistant in fine; but though he had been a reformer in his time, he was by no means pleased with youthful liberal ideas, and he considered Pierre far too much in love with novelties. He had heard Rome and Sparta spoken of by the village orators during the republic, and at that time he himself had adopted the surname of *Cassius*, which he had prudently laid aside on the return of the Bourbons. He therefore believed in a former golden age of liberty and equality; and since the fall of the Convention, thought assuredly that the world had for ever turned its back upon truth. Justice died in '93, he said, and all that you invent henceforth for its resuscitation, will only bury it still deeper.

He had therefore the whim of old men of all ages, he did not believe in a better future. His old age was a continued groaning, and sometimes a bitterness, from which his natural goodness and the serenity of his conscience hardly preserved him.

He had educated his son in the purest democratic sentiments; but he had given him this faith as a mystery, thinking that it could no longer produce anything, and that it was necessary to preserve it one's self, as one preserves the feeling of one's own dignity while undergoing an unjust degradation. This passive part could not long be sufficient to Pierre's active intelligence. Soon he wished to learn more of his age and his country than he could learn in his family or village. At seventeen he was seized with that desire for travelling, which, each year, carries away from their homes numerous phalanxes of young workmen to cast them into the adventurous life, the travelling apprenticeship, which is called the *Tour of France*. To the vague desire of knowing and understanding the movement of social life, was added the noble ambition of acquiring talent in his profession. He saw well that there were surer and quicker theories than the patient routine followed by his father and the elders of the country. A journeyman stonecutter, who passed through the village, had made him perceive the advantages of science by executing before him, on a wall, some designs which simplified, in an extraordinary manner, the slow and monotonous practice of his labour. From that moment he had resolved to study *draughting*, that is linear designing applicable to architecture, carpentry, and joiners' work. He had therefore asked permission of his father to make his tour of France. But he had met with a

great obstacle in the contempt which father Huguenin professed for theory. Almost a year's perseverance had been necessary in order to overcome the obstinacy of the old mechanic. Father Huguenin had also the worst possible opinion of the mysterious initiations of the Companionship. He pretended that all those secret societies of workmen, united under different names in *Devoirs* were only associations of bandits or charlatans, who, under pretext of learning more than others, spent the best years of their youth rambling up and down the streets of the cities, filling the drinking shops with their fanatical cries, and sprinkling the dust of the roads with their blood, shed for foolish questions of precedence.

There was a true side to these accusations; but they were so contrary to the esteem with which the Companionship was looked upon in the country, that according to all appearances, father Huguenin had some personal reason for complaint. Some of the elders of the village told that he had been seen to return home one evening covered with blood, his head broken and his clothes torn. He had been quite ill in consequence of this adventure, but had never been willing to give any explanation respecting it. His pride refused to confess that he had been overpowered by numbers. It was strongly suspected that he had fallen into an ambuscade, laid by some companions of the *Devoir* for certain rivals, and that he had been the victim of a mistake. The fact is, that from that time he had cherished a warm resentment, and professed a persevering aversion against the Companionship.

However this may have been, young Pierre's vocation was stronger than the thought of all the dangers and sufferings predicted by his father. His resolution conquered, and one fine morning master Cassius Huguenin was compelled to give him permission to depart. If he had been guided by the feelings of his heart alone, he would have furnished him with a good round sum, in order to render the enterprise agreeable and easy; but flattering himself that poverty would bring him back to the fold quicker than all exhortations, he gave him only thirty francs, and forbade his writing for more. He promised himself inwardly that he would answer his first request, but thought to frighten him by this appearance of rigour. The method did not succeed. Pierre departed, and did not return for four years. During this long pilgrimage he had not asked a single sou from his father, and in his letters had confined himself to inquiries respecting his health, and wishes for his prosperity, without ever informing him of his labours, or of any of the vicissitudes of his wandering existence. Father Huguenin was both uneasy and mortified at this; he had a great desire to give expression to that feel-

ing of tenderness which would have disarmed the young man's pride, but vexation always prevailed when he took up his pen, and he could not help writing in a tone of severe remonstrance, for which he reproached himself as soon as the letter had gone. Pierre testified neither vexation nor discouragement at this. He replied in a respectful manner, full of affection, but he was immovable; and the curate, who assisted the old joiner to read his letters, made him remark, not without pleasure, that his son's handwriting became more and more fine and flowing, that he expressed himself in chosen terms, and that there was in his style a measure, a nobleness, and even an eloquence, which already raised him above himself and all the old workmen of the country whom he called his equals.

At last, Pierre returned one fine spring morning, about three weeks before M. Lerebours' visit and communication. Father Huguenin, somewhat old, rather worn, very tired of working without respite, and especially saddened by constantly struggling in his workshop with rough and intractable apprentices, but too proud to complain, and affecting a cheerfulness which he too often did not feel, saw enter a handsome young man whom he did not know. Pierre had grown a full head taller; his bearing was noble and assured; his clear and pure complexion, which the sun had not tanned, was set off by a slight black beard. He was dressed as a mechanic, but with a scrupulous neatness, and bore upon his broad shoulders a well-rounded bag of boar's skin, which indicated a good provision of clothes. He bowed smiling as he crossed the threshold, and taking pleasure in the astonishment and uncertainty of his father, asked him for the direction of M. Huguenin, master joiner. Father Huguenin was thrilled by the sound of that manly voice, which confusedly recalled to him that of his little Pierre, but which had changed like the rest. He remained for some time speechless; and as Pierre seemed ready to withdraw, that, thought he, is a good-looking chap, and certainly resembles my ungrateful son; and a sigh escaped from his chest; but Pierre at once rushed into his arms, and they held each other embraced for a long while, neither daring to say a word, for fear the other should see his eyes filled with tears.

During the three weeks since the prodigal son's return to the peaceful habits of the paternal roof, the old joiner had experienced a gentle joy, mingled with some feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. He saw well that Pierre was steady in his conduct, sensible in his words, assiduous at labour.—But had he acquired that superiority of talent which he so ambitiously desired before his departure? Father Huguenin ardently desired that this might be so; and yet, in conse

quence of a contradictory feeling natural to man, and especially to an artist, he was afraid of finding his son wiser than himself. At first, he expected to see him make a display of his science, assume the tone of a master with his pupils, turn the workshop upside down, and request him, in a dictatorial tone, to change all his old and faithful tools for others of a new make, to which his old hands were not accustomed. But matters passed quite otherwise; Pierre said not a word of his studies, and when his father wished to interrogate him, he eluded all questions by saying that he had done his best to learn, and would do his best to practise; he went to work on the very day of his arrival, and received his father's orders like a common journeyman. He took good care not to criticise the work of the apprentices, and left the supreme direction of the shop to him whose it was of right. Father Huguenin, who had prepared himself for a desperate struggle, felt quite at his ease; and triumphing inwardly, he was satisfied with muttering several times between his teeth, that the world was not so much changed as people said, that the old fashions were always the best, and that people must acknowledge it at last, even after flattering themselves that they could reform everything. Pierre pretended not to hear; he continued his task, and his father was compelled to declare that it was executed with an unexceptionable exactness and an extraordinary rapidity.

'What I like,' said he, from time to time, 'is that you have learnt to work quickly, and yet none the less carefully.'

'If you are satisfied, all goes well,' replied Pierre.

When this anxiety of the old joiner was entirely dissipated, he felt tormented in another manner. He required an open triumph, and he was hurt that Pierre did not reply to his insinuations when he gave him to understand that his tour of France, without being prejudicial to him, had not had all the advantages which he had boasted to derive from it; he had discovered nothing wonderful; that, in a word, he might have learnt at home all that he had gone so far to seek. A kind of vexation insensibly took possession of him, and was sufficient to render him thoughtful and distrusting.

'My boy must be hiding some secret from me,' said he in a low voice to his gossip, the locksmith Lacrête. 'I would bet that he knows more than he shows. One would say that he is discharging a debt in working for me, but that he reserves his talents for the time when he shall work on his own account, in order to crush me completely.'

'Well,' replied father Lacrête, 'so much the better for you; you will rest then, for you have only this son, and there will be no need for you to trouble yourself about his establishment; he will secure a good standing alone, and you will at

last live joyously on your income. Are you not rich enough to leave business, and would you contend for the custom of the village against your only child?'

'Certainly not,' replied the joiner, 'I am not ambitious, and I love my son as myself; but you see, there is self-love! Do you think that, at sixty, you could be resigned to see your reputation eclipsed by a young man who was not willing even to take your lessons, considering them unworthy of his genius? Do you think it would be well on the part of a son, to say to everybody: See, I work better than my father, therefore my father was a know nothing.'

While reasoning thus, the old joiner fretted inwardly. He tried to find something to reprove in his son's workmanship, and if he discovered the least sign of embellishment in the pieces he executed, he criticised it bitterly. Pierre showed no vexation. With a stroke of his plane he quickly removed the ornament which seemed to have escaped his hand in spite of him. He was resolved to suffer everything, to allow himself to be humiliated a thousand times rather than have a dispute with his father, He knew him too well not to have forseen that he must not attempt to surpass him. Content with having acquired the talents of which he had been ambitious, he waited for the opportunity of causing them to be appreciated to come of itself, and he knew that it must come soon. In fact, it presented itself on the day when the steward conducted the two joiners to the chateau in order to examine the work in question.

CHAPTER III.

They were introduced into an ancient hall, which had served successively as a chapel, a library, a theatre, and a stable, according to the vicissitudes of the nobility, or the tastes of the different owners of the chateau. It was situated in a building more ancient than the others, composing the vast and imposing manor-house of Villepreux. It was of a fine gorgeous Gothic style; and the arches of the ceiling showed that it had been consecrated to religious worship. But in changing its use at various epochs, its ornaments had been changed, and the last traces of repairs that remained were wainscottings of the fifteenth century, which in the eighteenth had been covered with boards and painted canvass in order to play pastorals, the opera of the *Huron* and the *Melanie* of M. de la Harpe. A remnant of this scenery, daubed with faded garlands and reddish cupids, had been taken away; and, from a certain apartment situated in an adjacent turret a

door, long since walled up, was found to open upon the great hall, then cleared of its tinsel. Now, this turret was a favourite place of resort with a certain person of the family. As soon as a new exit was discovered from that apartment, and a new use for that door, it was desirable that it should communicate with the chapel; there was but one thing wanting, which was a staircase. Originally the door opened upon a gallery in which the chatelain and his family came to hear the services, and the turret served as an oratory. Under the regency, the gallery was used to support the back scene of the theatre, and the turret was at one time the green room of amateur actors, at another the dressing room of some *prima donna* of distinction. To communicate with the stage, use had been made of one of those rolling staircases, called step-ladders in joiner's phrase, which are often used in libraries and painters' studies, for the purpose of reaching the upper shelves or the higher parts of large canvasses. It was a rough temporary piece of workmanship, and could be moved to suit the occasions of the scene-shifter, the family of Villepreux, able to appreciate the beauty of wainscotting, despised and mutilated by the preceding generation, had resolved to turn to account that vast hall, abandoned, since the revolution, to rats and owls.

The following was their determination:

The ex-chapel of the middle ages, ex-library under Louis XIV., ex-theatre under the regency, ex-stable during the emigration, should serve henceforth as a studio for painting, or more properly as a museum. There should be collected all the old vases and rare furniture, all the family portraits and old pictures, all the valuable books, all the engravings—in a word, all the curiosities scattered throughout the chateau. There was room for all this and for all the tables, models, and easels they might wish to add.

The part which had been by turns the choir of the chapel and the stage of the theatre, should resume, as a relic, its semicircular form and its appearance of a choir, covered with sculptured wood-work. The old door of the turret which the masons had just unmasked, should open as before upon a gallery; but that gallery, furnished with a balustrade, should serve as landing place to a winding staircase, for which several designs had been attempted, the most convenient of which was to be chosen.

This chapel, staircase, and turret will be so important in the course of our recital, that we have endeavoured to present a picture of them to the reader's mind. We must add that the building referred to was situated between a part of the park, where the walks were overgrown with vegetation, and a little court or enclosure which had been by

turns a cemetery, garden, and preserve, but was now impassable and obstructed by ruins. It was therefore the most silent and least frequented place of the chateau, a philosophical retreat, or an artistic laboratory which it was desired to cleanse and to restore, but to preserve mysterious and secluded, either to labour there without distraction, or to withdraw from unwelcome visitors.

It was towards this solitary place that M. Lerebours conducted the two joiners, one calm, the other striving to appear so.

But at first, Pierre thought neither of his father nor of himself. The love of his profession, which he understood as an artist, was the only feeling that took possession of him when he entered that ancient hall, a real monument of the joiner's art. He stopped upon the threshold, seized with a deep respect, for no soul is more given to veneration than that of the conscientious workman. Then he advanced slowly and went through the whole with an unequal step, now hurrying to examine the details, now stopping to admire the effect. A holy joy shone in his face, his half-opened mouth did not utter a single word, and his father looked at him with astonishment, half understanding his transport, and asking himself what thought could so affect him, as to make him appear proud, bold, and taller by a whole head than usual. As to the steward, he was incapable of conceiving anything of this ecstasy, and as the two joiners kept silence, he determined to open the conversation.

'You see, my friends,' said he to them, with that benignant tone which was in him the precursor of a fit of stinginess, 'that there is not so much work here as might be supposed. I will observe that the friezes and figures being out of your line, we shall have turners and sculptors in wood come from Paris to mend such as are broken and to restore those which have disappeared. Thus you will have only the larger pieces; you will have to put pieces into the injured panels, to close the disjointed parts, to make here and there some mouldings, to insert bits into the cornices, &c. I think you can make those ova well. You, master Pierre, who have travelled, will not be embarrassed by the wreathed balusters, will you?' and the steward accompanied these impertinent doubts with a smile, half paternal, half disdainful.

The elder Huguenin, who was enough of a workman to understand the difficulty of the work, in proportion as he examined it, frowned at this direct address to the talents of his son. At the moment he was still divided between the secret jealousy of an artist and the proud hope of a father. His brow cleared when Pierre, who had not seemed to listen to M. Lerebours, replied in a decided tone,

'Sir Steward, I have learned in my travels all that I could; but there is nothing in these ova, in these wreaths, and in the connexion of all these pieces, which my father cannot undertake and properly execute. As to the figures and the delicate ornaments,' added he, lowering his voice with a feeling of secret modesty, 'they would be a task to tempt us both; for it is a beautiful work, and there would be great glory in accomplishing it. But it would require a great deal of time, perhaps we should not have all the necessary tools, and we certainly could not find journeymen in the country to second us. Therefore we will keep to our business. Now will you please to show us the situation and plan of the staircase of which you spoke?'

At the bottom of the chapel, the little door to which we have referred, mysteriously buried in the thickness of the wall and covered with a piece of old tapestry, had only for a landing place a few worm-eaten boards, the last remains of the gallery.

'It is here,' said M. Lerebours. 'As there is no recess for a staircase in the wall, an exterior one must be made entirely of wood and turning in spiral. Look and take your measures, if you wish. There is a ladder you can use.'

Pierre took the ladder and ascended to the gallery, which was only twenty feet above the floor. He raised the screen, and admired the exquisite work of the carved door, as well as the architectural ornaments of gracefully winding fillets which enclosed the casings and the panels.

'This door must also be repaired,' said he, 'for the arms which form the centre of the medallions have been broken.'

'Yes, in the revolution,' replied the steward, turning his eyes away with a hypocritical air; 'and that was a great barbarism, for it must have been the work of a skilful artist, doubtless.'

Father Huguenin's cheeks became of bright red. He well knew the Vandal who had formerly given the best stroke of a hatchet to that devastation.

'Times have changed,' said he, with a smile in which malice prevailed over confusion; 'and armorial bearings also. In those days people broke everything, and never thought they were cutting out work for the future.'

'That's not so bad for you,' said the intendant, with that cold and sharp laugh with which he always accompanied what he was pleased to call his sallies of gaiety.

'Nor for you either, M. Lerebours,' replied the old joiner. 'If those doors had not been burst open, you would not now have the keys; if this chateau had not been sold, the younger branch of the Villepreux would not have made such a good

bargain in buying it for assignats of the elder branch, and would not be so rich as it is.'

'The Villepreux family has always been rich,' said M. Lerebours, in a haughty tone: 'and before buying this estate it was not, I believe, upon the pavement.'

'Bah!' replied the elder Huguenin, in a bantering tone; 'on foot, on horseback, or in coach, we are all upon this poor pavement of the good God!'

During this digression, Pierre, still examining the door, endeavoured to open it, in order to see both sides. M. Lerebours stopped him.

'No one enters there,' said he, in a dictatorial voice; 'the door is locked inside; it is mademoiselle de Villepreux's study, and I alone have the right of entrance during her absence.'

'Still the door must be taken down to be repaired,' said father Huguenin, 'unless you mean to leave it unfinished.'

'That will come in its time,' replied M. Lerebours: 'our business now is with the staircase. This is the place, and if you will come down, I will show you the plan.'

Pierre came down from the ladder, and the steward unrolled before him several sheets; they were etchings from pictures of old Flemish interiors.

'Mademoiselle,' said M. Lerebours, 'has desired that we should conform to the plan of these staircases, and choose among these specimens that which would be best adapted to the necessities of the situation. I have consequently had a plan drawn according to the laws of geometry; I presume that you will be able to conform to it when it has been explained to you.'

'This plan is defective,' said Pierre, as soon as he cast his eyes upon the drawing which the intendant unrolled before him with an important air.

'Think before you speak, my friend,' replied the steward; 'this plan was executed by my son—my own son.'

'Your son has made a mistake,' returned Pierre, coldly.

'My son is an *employé aux ponts-et chaussées*;* learn that, master Pierre,' cried the intendant, quite red with anger.

'I have nothing to say to the contrary,' said Pierre, with a smile; 'but if the gentleman, your son, were here, he would see his error and would make another plan.'

'Under your direction, doubtless, sir wiseacre.'

'Under that of good sense, sir steward; and he would give me one that I could follow.'

Father Huguenin laughed with pleasure in his grey beard;

* A surveyor or engineer employed by government on the bridges and highways.

he was delighted that his son should avenge him for M. Lerebours' insinuations.

'Let me look at the plan,' said he with an understanding air; and taking from the pocket of his vest, which reached to his knees, a pair of horn spectacles, he placed them on his nose and pretended to examine the drawing, though he knew nothing about it. Linear designing was a matter he had always pretended to despise; but an instinct faith told him at this moment that his son was right. He did not fail to affirm that the plan was false and maintained it with so much decision that Pierre would have thought him converted in favour of draughting had he not perceived that he held the paper upside down. He hastened to take it from him, for fear that the steward, who however was no better versed than he in such matters, might remark it.

'Your son may be skilful on the bridges and highways,' pursued father Huguenin with a laugh; 'but there are not many staircases built on the roads that I know of. Every one to his business, M. Lerebours, without intending to offend you.'

'So you refuse to build this staircase?' said M. Lerebours, addressing Pierre.

'I will undertake to rectify it,' replied Pierre with gentleness. 'That will not be difficult, and the movement will be the same. I will add an open-work balustrade of oak in the style of the wainscottings, and pendentives corresponding with those of the ceiling.'

'Then you are a sculptor also?' said M. Lerebours bitterly. 'You have all talents!'

'Oh, not all,' replied Pierre with a good-natured sigh, 'not even all those I ought to have. But try me in my line, and if you are satisfied, you will forgive me for having contradicted you; I had no intention of wounding you, I can swear. If I had to do with the building of a bridge or the laying out of a road, I should place myself with pleasure under the direction of M. Isidore, because I know that I should have many useful things to learn of him.'

M. Lerebours, somewhat mollified, consented to listen to the criticism full of gentleness which Pierre made to him of the plan in question. The demonstration was clearly given, and the elder Huguenin understood it at once; for, by practice and natural logic, he had attained quite an elevated understanding of his art; but M. Lerebours, who had neither theory nor practice, perspired in great drops while he pretended to understand; and to close the discussion, it was decided that Pierre should draw another plan, which should be submitted to the architect whom the family honoured with their patronage. M. Lerebours was well pleased to make

this trial before employing the young joiner, and they agreed that the estimate of the labour and the rate of compensation should be put off until the judgment of the architect.

When the Hugnenins had returned home, the father kept a profound silence. They resumed their work until the evening, and Pierre, with no more pride than before, began to plane the boards as his father directed; but it was easy to see that the latter no longer laid out work for him with so much assurance, and that he spoke to him with more respect than usual. He even went so far as to consult him upon a very simple process which Pierre made use of in carrying on a certain job.

'Your way is good also,' replied Pierre.

'But in fine,' said the old man, 'your's is better, doubtless?'

'It is easier to me," replied Pierre.

'Then you disapprove mine?' said father Huguenin again.

'By no means,' replied the young man,' since with a little more time and labour you attain the same result.'

The old joiner understood this delicate criticism and bit his lips; then an approving smile effaced his involuntary grimace.

After supper, Pierre went to work. He selected a large sheet of paper from his portfolio, took his pencil, his compasses, and his rule, drew lines and cut them by other lines, rounded his curves, his semi-curves, made his projections, his openings, and at midnight his plan was finished. Father Huguenin, who pretended to slumber by the chimney-side, followed him with his eyes over his shoulder. When he saw that he closed his portfolio and was going to bed without a word; 'Pierre,' said he at last in a smothered voice, 'you are playing a bold game! Are you very sure that you know more than M. Lerebours' son, than a young man who has been brought up in the schools and is employed by government? This morning, when you explained the faults of his plan, although you used words with which I am not very familiar, I understood that you might be right; but it is easy to blame and not so easy to do better. How can you flatter yourself that you make no mistake yourself in all those lines you have crossed upon a piece of paper? It is only by trying the pieces with each other and measuring anew, that one can be very sure of what he does. If you make a mistake in working, it is only a day and a little wood lost; you correct, nobody sees it, and there's an end. Instead of which, if you there make a single false line, all the fine scholars with whom you wish to compare yourself will cry out that you are a know-nothing, a stupid fellow; and you will be ruined in reputation before doing anything. It is new almost forty-five years that I have conducted my business with honour and

profit; a mistake upon paper might have ruined me at the beginning of my career. Therefore I have taken good care not to compete with those who pretended to know more than I. I have made my little way with my little proverb: "By the work you know the workman." Take care of yourself, my child! Mistrust your self-love.'

'My self-love does not enter here, be sure of that, my good father,' replied Pierre; 'I do not wish to humiliate any one, nor seek to bring myself into notice; but there is above us all something which is infallible, and which no vanity, no jealousy, can turn to its purposes: that something is truth demonstrated by calculation and experience. Whoever has once clearly seen this truth, can never be betrayed into false applications. I have already told you, your processes are good, since they enable you to succeed in all you undertake; and I will add that, the more I examine your work, the more do I admire the presence of mind, the intelligence, the courage, and the memory you must have required to succeed without the aid of geometry. The theory would teach nothing to you who have a superior mind; but you will understand the advantages of this theory when I tell you that, with its assistance, the most simple of your apprentices could attain, in a short time, not the same skill, but the same certainty, which forty-five years of assiduous labour have enabled you to acquire. Exact science is nothing else than the result of the experience of all men collected, ascertained, and demonstrated in those terms, the technicality of which wrongly repels you; for the precision is more easily retained than the vague definitions in common use. With the help of designing, you might have known at twenty what you perhaps hardly knew at forty, and you might have exercised your great intelligence upon new subjects.

'There is something good in what you say' replied the elder Huguenin; 'but if you triumph in the challenge which you give to the steward's son, do you not think that his father will be mortally angry with us, and intrust to some other the work he proposed to us this morning?'

'He will be careful not to dissatisfy his masters. Recollect, father, that M. Villepreux is an active, sharp-sighted, economical man; M. Lerebours knows that things must be done well and without prodigality; this is why he chose you, though he does not like the ancient patriots. He will preserve the custom of the chateau for you, do not doubt it, and the more because the architect will tell him that you are more capable than many others.'

Overcome by the wisdom of his son, father Huguenin slept tranquilly, and three days after, was sent for to the chateau to enter into an understanding with the architect, who had

come in person to examine the place and make an estimate of the total expense, on account of the chatelain.

The architect was quite inclined to decide in favour of the most powerful, that is, of M. Lerebours and his offspring. Thus, as soon as he had cast his eyes upon the two plans, he cried out:

'Without any doubt your son's plan is excellent, my little father Lerebours; and yours, my poor friend Pierre, halts on three legs.' Saying this, he contemptuously threw upon the table the plan of the *employé aux ponts-et-chaussees,* not doubting that it was the work of the joiner.

'Excuse me, sir,' said Pierre, with his accustomed tranquillity, 'the plan you reject is not mine. Have the goodness to look at that which you approve; my name is written in small characters upon the last step of the staircase.'

'Faith, that is true!' cried the architect, with a loud laugh. 'I am sorry for you, my poor father Lerebours, your son has pocketed his own ball. Come, don't be troubled; that may happen to everybody. As for you, my boy,' added he, turning towards the younger Huguenin and clapping him on the shoulder, 'you understand your business, and if you are as good a youth as you are a good geometrician, you will make your way. This drawing is made with much taste and elegance,' continued he, holding up Pierre Huguenin's design, 'and this staircase will be as easy as it is elegant. Employ that joiner, father Lerebours, you may go further and fare worse.'

'Such is my intention,' said Lerebours, with the calmness of a profound politician. 'I know how to render justice to talent and to recognise merit wherever it is found. My son is certainly very strong in geometry, but he has a head so young, so ardent—'

'Come, come, he must have been thinking of some pretty girl when he drew his plan,' said the architect. 'The rogue is handsome enough to have such distractions frequently.'

Father Lerebours began to laugh like a kestrel, while the architect answered him like a great bell. When they had exhausted all their foolish gaiety, they went to work upon the general estimate of the repairs, while the master joiner and his son made that which concerned their department. The price was disputed with a horrible tenacity on the part of Lerebours, and a great firmness on that of Pierre Huguenin. His pretensions were so moderate, that his father, knowing well that Lerebours would wish to beat them down without shame, accused him secretly of not understanding his business. But Pierre was immovable, and the architect, compelled to acknowledge that his demand was reasonable, closed the discussion by whispering to the steward, 'Finish at once, before

the father stops the bargain.' The contract was therefore signed. The architect agreed to survey after the work was done. After all, considering that our institutions are such as always to sacrifice the workman to his employer, the business was a good one for the master joiner.

'Well,' said he to his son, as they returned home, 'you understand everything; this is the first time in my life I have ever made a bargain without having my say.'

CHAPTER IV.

A WEEK afterwards, the Huguenins, having completed all the work for which they had engaged with their village customers, took possession of the chapel and commenced their labours. Usually, at Paris, the mechanics carry home their work, and only return to the premises to place and fit the parts. But, in the chateau, it is quite customary for a building under repair to become the workshop of all those employed upon it.

Pierre was always up before daylight. By the first rays of the sun, he was already passing the compasses over the old oaken planks of the venerable wainscotting, and the work was laid out for the apprentices when they arrived, their eyes still swollen with sleep. It happened one evening that Pierre, absorbed in his examination of the wainscotting, and having traced several figures with chalk upon a panel blackened by time, forgot, in his calculations, the late hour and the solitude that had grown around him. His father had retired long before with all the workmen, the doors of the chateau were closed, and the watchdogs loosed in the court yards. The vigilant steward, surprised at seeing a lamp still burning behind the high glass windows of the workshop, came, his bunch of keys in one hand and a dark lantern in the other, to look with precaution at the door.

'It is you, master Pierre,' cried he, when he recognised the joiner through the opening. 'Have not you worked enough for one day?'

Pierre having replied that he had still work for an hour, M. Lerebeurs gave him the key of one of the park gates, desiring him to be careful to extinguish his lamp and to close the doors when he departed, wishing him good courage, and went to give himself up to the delights of repose.

Pierre remained two hours longer, and when he had worked out the problem which embarrassed him, determined to go

home to sleep; but he heard the clock of the chateau strike two. Pierre feared that his being abroad at such an hour might be noticed by the villagers, and give rise to remarks. He avoided the reputation of eccentricity with which his love of study would not have failed to invest him. Besides, his apprentices must soon arrive, and if he went to bed, he might not wake early enough to receive them and set them to work. He determined to stretch himself upon a heap of those small strips and shavings of wood which the joiners remove from their boards in planing. It was a bed quite soft enough for his stout limbs. His vest served him for a pillow, and his blouse for a covering. But, as the day approached, the air became more fresh, the morning dampness penetrated through the windows, from which the greater part of the sashes had been removed; and this discomfort of cold was increased by a slight stiffness which Pierre had incurred in consequence of being all day upon a ladder. He looked to see if he could not find something to warm himself with, and his eyes fell upon the old tapestry which covered the little door spoken of in a preceding chapter of this history. The door had been taken down in order to be repaired, and the tapestry alone remained. Pierre mounted upon the ladder, but only then recollected that the careful steward had nailed this tapestry to the wall on all sides, to prevent the dust and profane looks from penetrating into mademoiselle de Villepreux's study.

He also remembered the important tone with which the steward had forbidden his opening that door, on the day when he wished to see both sides of it. A feeling of curiosity took possession of him; not that vulgar, selfish curiosity which belongs to narrow minds, but that adventurous desire experienced by a vivid imagination, devoted to ignorance of the greater part of those things which it could comprehend. 'The study of the young lady of the chateau must be,' he thought, 'filled with those objects of art which are intended for the hall. There must be books, pictures, and certainly some ancient furniture, very curious and very interesting to me. I have only two or three nails to draw out; I am neither a spy nor a robber: why should the breath exhaled from my chest, why should my respectful regard for all that is beautiful, profane this sanctuary?'

It was quickly done. A slight touch unfastened the tapestry, and Pierre entered the cabinet. It was a small rotunda occupying the whole second story of one of the turrets jutting from the chateau. This pretty room had been decorated with elegance, and was lighted by a single vast window overlooking the gardens, woods, and meadows, as far as the eye could

reach. A handsome Turkish carpet, curtains of damask, some plaster casts, an easel, some old engravings richly framed, a handsome coffer dating from the revival of the arts, a dresser in the same style, some books, a crucifix, an old lute painted and gilt, a skull, some Chinese vases, a thousand details of that modern taste without order, without form, and without object, but elegant, eccentric, learned, which seems to venerate the past while playing with the present: such was the artistic pandemonium which met the glance of the young mechanic.

At that epoch the taste for curiosities had not yet decended into vulgar life. The shop of *bric a-brac* (odds and ends) was not as essential in every street of Paris, and even in the outskirts, as the baker's counter and the wine merchant's sign. It was more fashionable to seek on the quays for these faded vestiges of our forefathers' luxury. It was not so easy as it now is to find skilful workmen accustomed to repair them. All the articles plundered from the old chateau or proscribed by the Greek and Roman taste of the empire, and thrown aside in all the corners of the world, had not issued from the granaries and hovels, whence the magic wand of modern fashion has drawn so many during the past few years. They were not then imitated with so much art that it was impossible to determine their age: in fine, they were believed more precious because they were believed more rare. It was already the fashion to surround one's self with these heterogeneous objects and to live in the dust of the past, but it was an exquisite fashion, and prevailed only among the higher classes or artists of renown. Thence came the literature of coffers, of drinking cups and buffets, the painting of dressers and trophies the bringing upon the lyric scene of coats of mail, of daggers and bucklers, and so many other tendencies of art, childish and beneficent manias, which in all ages have had the privilege of amusing and ruining the rich, the idlers, and the imitators, whichever we may be.

Pierre was naively delighted with all thesebaubles, imagining that mademoiselle de Villepreux was the only young lady artistic enough to sit in a chair of the time of Charles IX., and courageous enough to have a human skull among her ribbons and laces. He thence conceived a high admiration for that young person whom he confusedly remembered having seen in his youthful plays, and felt doubly happy to execute the noble work of the chapel under the eyes of a lady capable of appreciating its merit. Then he contemplated with delight the Madonna della Seggiola engraved by Morghen, and represented to himself the young chatelaine under those features at once angelic and powerful. Agitated, transported, he would have forgotten himself there the whole day had he not been recalled to his duty by the noise of his workmen, who came

whistling along the alleys of the park. He hastened to leave the turret and return to the workshop, after having nailed the tapestry again with care.

Afterwards, M. Lerebours asked very often to have the door of the cabinet repaired and put in its place. He became impatient; he said that the dust found its way in, that the family would soon arrive, that mademoiselle would be much dissatisfied at not being able to shut herself up at once in her turret, for she loved that apartment particularly; in fine, that it was the first thing to be done. At one time he assumed a wheedling and caressing tone, at another he scolded and rolled his little eyes with an indignant air. Pierre promised always, and did not keep his word. He had hidden the door so well behind a heap of boards and joists, that it could not possibly be found. Everything went on so quickly and so well otherwise, that M. Lerebours did not dare complain too loudly.

The fact is, that more than once Pierre passed the first hours of the night in the turret, standing in ecstasy before the furniture, the engravings, the models. What tempted him more than all the rest was the beautifully bound and gilt books which glittered upon the shelves of a small ebony bookcase fastened to the wall. Pierre had only to stretch out his hand in order to gratify his curiosity, but he feared to commit something like an abuse of confidence in laying upon those rich bindings a hand hardened and blackened by toil. One Sunday, when everybody had left the chateau, even M. Lerebours, Pierre yielded to the temptation. He was always exquisitely neat on Sunday; he had an innate taste for elegance; and the least spot upon his clothes, the least dust upon his hands or hair, troubled him more than perhaps should be the case with a perfectly sensible mechanic. When he had assured himself, by looking in the *psyché* of the cabinet, that his dress, though less rich than that of a bourgeois,* was not less irreproachable, he decided to open a book. It was the *Emile* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Pierre knew it by heart; he had obtained it at Lyons, and had read it during evenings with several friends, companions in his tour of France. Upon the same shelf Pierre found the *Martyrs* of Chateaubriand, the tragedies of Racine, the Lives of the Saints, the Letters of Sévigné, the Social Contract, the Republic of Plato, the Encyclopædia, various historical works, and many other books quite astonished at finding themselves together. He devoured in the course of three months, that is, in the amount of about

* The acknowledged divisions of society in France are, the nobility, clergy, the bourgeoise or citizens, and the people, the latter including all mechanics.

sixty hours, divided between a dozen Sundays, not the letter, but the substance of the greater part of these works; and he has often said since, that those hours were the most beautiful of his life. He mingled therewith I know not what attraction of romantic mystery which rendered more sweet the poetry of certain books, and more solemn the gravity of others. But what attracted him the most, was all that had a philosophic relation with the history of legislations. He there sought with eagerness for the great secret of the organization of society into different castes, and was confirmed in the ideas he had previously acquired by reading abridgments, and receiving, though from a distance, the shock of political impressions. What an extent of knowledge, what a superiority of ideas would he not have attained at that period, if he had had time and books at discretion! but he could not neglect his work; and after some nocturnal visits to the turret, Pierre perceived that his head was heavy and his arms stiff the next day. He therefore considered it necessary to forbid to himself these intellectual delights during the week, the more that he felt an excessive self-love in not leaving in the cabinet any trace of a workman's dusty steps. I know not how dissatisfied he would have been, had he stained with moist finger the satin margins of those beautiful books. What was his secret fancy in cherishing so frivolous a fear? He would have been quite embarrassed to tell you at the time. Vague, strange, irresistible thoughts, fermented in his bosom. He felt in himself a nobility of nature more pure and more exquisite than all the titles acquired and consecrated by the laws of the world. He was every moment compelled to stifle the bursts of a nature in a manner princely, under the envelope of a mechanic. He resigned himself to it with a strength and a serenity which so much the more characterized this innate grandeur. But during these hours of mysterious study, seated with nobleness upon the cushions of a velvet sofa, he contemplated a beautiful landscape, the poetry of which he felt revealed to him in proportion as the descriptions of the poets translated to him the divine art of which creation is the visible expression. In those moments Pierre Huguenin felt himself king of the world; but when he found upon his pensive brow, upon his dry and bruised hands, the eternal marks of his slave's chains, burning tears fell from his eyes. Then he fell upon his knees, raised his arms towards heaven, and prayed for patience for himself, for justice for all his brothers abandoned upon the earth to the ignorance and brutishness of poverty.

To the violent and profound emotions of history succeeded an ineffable charm and transports of the imagination when the first romances of Walter Scott fell into his hands. You

will soon learn how dangerous this pleasure became to him, and how much he was influenced by this last reading.

CHAPTER V.

A TROUBLESOME accident interrupted the labours of the workshop at the moment when they were going on best. One of Father Huguenin's most skilful apprentices dislocated his shoulder by falling from a ladder; and as a misfortune never comes alone, Father Huguenin himself ran a splinter into his finger so as to disable him. M. Lerebours was full of gracious condolings for a day or two; but when he saw that the apprentice was sent home to his family to be nursed, and when the village physician had examined the joiner's hand and declared that a fortnight's rest would be necessary to cure the wound, the intractable steward talked of having the staircase commenced by other contractors. This was a mortal fear to Father Huguenin, who felt more self-love than personal interest in having the sole charge of all the job. He wished to go to work again; but the wound became worse, and he was again obliged to desist. The physician threatened to amputate the finger, the hand, perhaps the arm, if he persisted.

'Cut off my head at once, then!' said Father Huguenin, throwing his chisel with despair upon the floor; and he went to shut himself up at home in anger and in pain.

'Father,' said Pierre to him in the evening, 'something must be done. You cannot work for several weeks without endangering your health, perhaps your life. William was your best workman; he will require two months, at least, to get well. I am therefore alone with boys, zealous no doubt, but inexperienced, and devoid of the knowledge necessary for a work of this importance. I will not conceal from you that, compelled for some days to labour for three, I feel my own strength failing; I am losing my appetite, I cannot sleep. I may perhaps fall ill; I will go on as long as I can, without complaining, that you well know; but the time will come when fatigue will overpower us, and then M. Lerebours, supposing that he is patient until then, will have good reason to substitute others for us.'

'What can you do! fate opposes us!' replied the elder Huguenin with a deep sigh; 'and when the devil fights against poor folks, they must give way.'

'No, father, fate opposes no one; and as to the devil, if it be true that he is wicked, it is certain that he is a coward. You will not fail if you listen to me. We must have two good workmen, and all will go well.'

'And where will you get them? Will the master-joiners in the neighbourhood give up theirs to us? When they are good, there are never any to spare; and if they are bad, there are always too many. Shall I propose to one of those masters to go shares with me? In such a case I would rather retire completely. Where is the use of trouble if we must divide the honour?'

'Therefore the whole honour must remain with you,' replied the young joiner, who was well acquainted with his father's weakness; 'you must not have any partner. I will only go and get two workmen, and of the best, I assure you; leave it to me.'

'But once again, where will you fish for them?' cried the father Huguenin.

'I will go and enlist them at Blois,' replied Pierre.

Here the old man frowned in so strange a manner, and his face assumed an expression of such severe reproach, that Pierre was amazed.

'That is well!' returned father Huguenin after an energetic silence, 'this is what you wish to arrive at. You must have companions of the *Tour of France, children of the Temple,* sorcerers, libertines, the off-scourings of the highways? In what *Devoir* will you choose them? for you have not done me the honour to inform me with what diabolical society you are affiliated, and I do not yet know if I am the father of a *wolf,* of a *fox,* of a *goat,* or of a *dog.*'*

'Your son is a man,' said Pierre, recovering his courage, 'and be sure, father, that no one will ever address to him a degrading term; I knew that I should incur your anger by speaking of enlisting journeymen; but I flatter myself that you will reflect upon it, and that an unjust prejudice will not prevent your using the only means left you of retaining the job at the chateau.'

'Really, that is strange! and I see clearly that all this pretended gentleness covered evil designs against me. Then the *devorants*† are to enter my house by the window! for I shall certainly shut the door in their faces; God knows if they will not cut my throat in my bed, as they cut each other's throats at the corners of the woods and in the wine-shops.'

While saying this, father Huguenin raised his voice, and,

* Different nicknames which the societies of journeymen of several trades gave to each other.

† Companions of the Devoirs—originally *devoirants*.

without thinking of his wounded hand, struck upon the table with all his strength.

'Whom are you quarrelling with?' said his neighbour, the master-locksmith, as he entered, attracted by the noise: 'do you want to overturn the house, and are you not ashamed to make such a rumpus at your years? What, young man, are you self-willed with your father! that is not right. Youth is a latch which ought to obey the mainspring of riper age.'

When Pierre had told father Lacrète, the latter began to laugh.

'Ah! ha!' said he, turning towards his gossip, 'I recognise you there, my old madcap of a neighbour, with your grudge against the Companions. Have they beaten you because you would not *tope*?* Have they put your shop under the ban because you could not *howl*? Yet your voice is strong enough, your fist heavy enough to have the requisite talents. By my faith, I think you very foolish to go thus against custom; and for myself I regret that I have not thirty years less on my shoulders; I would go and get received into some society, for it appears that the strongest live well there at the expense of the most cowardly, and that afterwards they call up the devil in some graveyard, or at night between four roads. The devil comes with legions of ten thousand imps, and that must be curious to see. To think that I have heard the devil talked about for more than sixty years, and that I have never been able to get a sight of him! Come, Pierre, you know him, for you have been received as a companion, tell me a little how he is made.'

'Is it possible, neighbour,' said Pierre, laughing, 'that you believe in such follies?'

'I don't believe in them entirely,' replied the locksmith, with good natured malice; 'but in fine I do believe in them a little. I shall never forget the fright I had when I was young, and heard upon the mountain of Valmont, where I was then working as a blacksmith with my father, the singular cries and the horrible howlings, which they called the night hunt, or the sabbat. I hid myself trembling in the straw of my bed, and my father said to me: "Come, come, go to sleep, my boy! that is the wolves howling in the forest." But there were others who said: "That is the journeymen carpenters who are receiving a new brother into their body, and they make him sign a contract with the devil; if you keep awake till one in the morning, you will

*Toper is the word used to express the greeting required by the Companions of some of the Devoirs; the literal meaning is, to say done, strike hands, conclude a bargain; it will be more fully explained hereafter.

see Satan pass in the sky under the form of a fiery square.' Really, I believed it so well, that, even while dying with fear, I burnt with desire to see him; but I never could help going to sleep before the hour, for fatigue was stronger than curiosity. But, would you believe it! since I have been told that the locksmiths have a *Devoir*, I begin to think there is not so much deviltry about it, and that it may be good for something.'

'Good for what?' cried the elder Huguenin, more and more angry, 'really, you will drive me mad! Would not one say that he was going to study the *freemasonry* of the Companions, at his age?'

'Yes, at my age, I should like to learn it,' replied father Lacrête, who was obstinate and opinionated like a true locksmith; 'and if you wish to know what it is good for, I will tell you that it serves to make people have a good understanding, to know, to support, and help each other, which is not so foolish nor so bad.'

'And I will tell you how it serves them,' returned father Huguenin indignantly, 'to have an understanding against you, to learn from each other the means of filching your money, to support them in order to destroy your credit, in fine, to help them to ruin you.'

'Then they are very sharp,' pursued the neighbour; 'for I cannot see all that, and yet not a year passes without my enlisting two or three. I never have a job of any consequence at the chateau, without going to the city to find some good youth, very intelligent, very skilful, very gay especially, for I love gaiety! Those madcaps have always some fine songs to cheer our ears and give us courage while we hammer in cadence on our anvils. They are brave as lions, work better than we do, know all sorts of stories, relate their journeys, and talk to you of all countries. That makes me young again, that makes me live. Eh! eh! father Huguenin, your hairs have whitened sooner than mine, because you have kept up your pride as an old master and have never been willing to be on good terms with young folks.'

'Young people must live with young people, and when old ones wish to share their diversions, they laugh at and despise them. You have done a great business by consorting with journeymen, haven't you? Instead of forming those good apprentices who work for you while they pay you, you find your profit (a singular profit!) in paying and feeding great scamps who make you pass for a know-nothing, and who ruin you.'

'If they make me pass for a know-nothing, that is probably because I am one; if they ruin me, it is because I am quite willing to be ruined. And suppose it amuses me, to spend

what I gain from day to day? I have no children. Haven't I the right to lead a joyous life with those adopted children who help me to drive away the ennui of solitude and the anxiety of years?'

'I pity you,' replied father Huguenin, shrugging his shoulders.

When the two gossips had quarrelled to their hearts, content, they perceived that Pierre, instead of taking pleasure at seeing himself supported by the neighbour, had quietly gone to bed. This prudent conduct on the one hand, and on the other the neighbour's bold contradictions, which exhausted all father Huguenin's anger in one sitting; in fine, the necessity of action, made the old joiner reflect, and the next morning he said to his son: 'Well, do you go to the city and bring me some workmen. Choose such as you please, provided they are not companions.'

Pierre understood this contradictory permission. He knew that his father often yielded in fact, though he never did in words. He took his cane and departed for Blois, resolved to enlist the first good companions he found, and to make them pass for uninitiated apprentices if he should find his father as badly disposed as usual against the secret societies.

CHAPTER VI.

While Pierre Huguenin journeyed on foot by the fresh paths, so well known to the wandering workmen, who traverse France in every direction, as the bird flies, a heavy travelling berlin raised clouds of dust as it rolled on the main road from Blois to Valençay. It contained nothing less than the Villepreux family, who approached their chateau with an imposing rapidity.

It is hardly necessary to say, that the impatient steward, suffering from violent emotions during the past week, departed that morning on his iron-grey pony in order to meet the family. He was much troubled by this return, which had been at first announced for the middle of autumn, and more recently determined upon for the beginning of summer. He could not understand why the old count his master should play him (that was his expression) such a trick. Nothing was sufficiently prepared to receive them. Time had been wanting; for M. Lerebours would have required at least six months to do what he wished, and he had had but three. Therefore he was the victim of a black melancholy, even while he trotted

along at a slow pace to meet his master. His hand allowed the reins to lie upon the neck of his pony, which dropped its head with an air not less melancholy than his own. 'Alas!' said M. Lerebours to himself, 'the chapel is not finished. There is more than half the work yet to do, the house will be full of dust, M. the count will have his morning cough, and his temper will suffer from it. The noise of the workmen will trouble mademoiselle. If she could only have her favourite cabinet to study in! And if, at least, that cursed door were restored! But no, nothing! not a workman to replace it! Father Lacrête must needs be drunk this morning; and there is Pierre Huguenin gone off, God knows where, on such a day as this! Ah! the thoughtless mechanics! If they could only imagine the troubles and anxieties which beset, day and night, the brain of an intendant like myself?'

He was still suffering from these heart-rending reflections, when the gallop of another pony, quicker and more vigorous than his own, drew him from his revery. The iron-grey raised its ears and whinnied with satisfaction on recognising the approach of a certain black pony, belonging to the son of his master. The steward's brow cleared a little at the sight of his dear Isidore, the *employé aux ponts-et chaussées.*

'I began to fear that you had not received my letter,' said the father.

'I received it this very morning,' replied the son; 'your messenger found me two leagues from here, on the new road, and very busy with the engineer, who is a stupid blockhead, and cannot move a step without me. I asked him for two days furlough, which he made a great difficulty about granting, for I really don't know how he will get along without my advice. I insisted; I had no intention of failing in my duty towards the family, and especially I am as impatient as all the devils to see Josephine and Yseult again; they must have changed a great deal! Josephine must still be pretty, I imagine! As to Yseult, she will be delighted to see me.'

'My son,' said the intendant, quickening the pace of his steed, 'I have two remarks to make to you: first, when you speak of those ladies, you should not name the cousin first; and then, when you speak of M. the count's daughter, you should not say Yseult quite short; you should not even say mademoiselle Yseult; you should say at most mademoiselle de Villepreux; in general you should say *mademoiselle.*'

'And why so?' returned the *employè aux ponts-et-chaussées.* 'Have I not always called her so without any one's finding fault? Did not we play blind-man's-buff and hide and-seek together only four years ago? I should like to have her play

the prude with me! You will see that she will call me Isidore quite short: consequently—'

'Consequently, my son, you should keep in your place; recollect that mademoiselle is no longer a child, and that, during the four years since you saw her, she has doubtless entirely forgotten you. You, especially, should never forget who she is, and who you are.'

Wearied by his father's remarks, M. Isidore shrugged his shoulders, began to whistle, and to cut short, put spurs to his horse, which began to gallop, covered with dust the new clothes of the steward, and soon left him behind.

We have recorded this conversation only for the sake of showing to the clear sighted reader, the self-sufficiency and grossness which were the most prominent points of M. Isidore Lerebours' character. Ignorant, envious, shallow, noisy, passionate, and flippant, he crowned all these happy qualities with an unsupportable vanity and a habit of shameless boasting. His father suffered from these inconveniences without knowing how to repress them, and, himself vain to excess, persisted none the less in believing Isidore a man full of merit, and destined to make his way, for the sole reason that he was his son. He attributed his heedlessness to the impetuosity of too generous a temperament, and he could not cease inwardly admiring the fat muscles and the heavy mould of that Hercules with crisped hair, with crimson cheeks, with thundering voice, with noisy and brutal laugh.

Isidore arrived at the post-house nearest the chateau twenty minutes before his father. It was there that the family were to change horses for the last time. His first care was to order a chamber in the inn, and to open his valise for the purpose of renewing his toilet. He put on a hunting-jacket, the most ridiculous in the world, although he had copied it from that of a young dandy of a good family with whom he had been fox hunting in the woods of Valengay. But the short and fanciful garment became grotesque upon his square figure already loaded with flesh. His shirt of rose-coloured calico, his gold chain garnished with trinkets, the arrogant knot of his cravat, his gloves of doe-skin, wrinkled by the exuberance of his red and swollen hands, everything about him was unpleasing, impertinent, and vulgar.

He was none the less satisfied with his appearance, and to fortify his nerves, he began by kissing the maid-servant of the inn; then, he beat his horse in the stable, swore enough to break all the windows in the village, and swallowed several bottles of beer dashed with glasses of rum, all the while retailing his accustomed gasconades to the idlers of the place, who listened to him, some with admiration, others with contempt.

At last, towards sunset, they heard the snapping of the postillion's whip upon the hill; M. Lerebours ran to the stable to have harnessed the horses which were as speedily as possible to draw the illustrious family to their signoral abode before night. He had his own pony bridled, in order to be ready to escort his masters; and with his forehead bathed in sweat, his heart palpitating with emotion, was upon the threshold of the post-house at the moment when the berlin arrived.

'Quick, the horses!' in a voice still strong cried the old count, leaning from the window. 'Ah! there you are, M. Lerebours! I have the honour to salute you. You do me honour; not too well, and yourself? Here is my daughter. Delighted to see you again. Have the goodness to see the horses put to at once.'

Such was the old count's brief and politely wearied reception. When the horses were harnessed, the family would have departed without paying the least attention to M. Isidore, who stood beside his father, darting impudent glances into the carriage, had not the postillion caused himself to be waited for, according to custom; then a small face, brunette and pale, with quite a fine expression, appeared at the window, and received with a coldly astonished air the familiar bow of the *employe aux ponts-et-chaussees*.

'Who is that boy?' said the count, measuring Isidore.

'It is my son,' replied the intendant, with an humble but inwardly triumphant air.

'Ah ha! it is Isidore! I did not recognise you, my lad. You have grown large and fat! I cannot compliment you on the change. At your age one should be slimmer than you are. Have you done learning to read?'

'O yes, M. the count,' replied Isidore, attributing the appreciation made by the count of his body and mind to his jesting good-nature; 'I am *employe*, I finished my studies long ago.'

'In that case,' said the count, 'you are more advanced than Raoul, who has not finished his.'

While saying this, the old count pointed to his grandson, a young man of twenty, well drawn up and of an insignificant face, who was seated upon the box by the side of the valet-de-chambre, in order to see the country better. Isidore cast a glance towards his former playfellow, and they interchanged a bow by raising their respective caps. Isidore was mortified to see that his was of cloth, while the young viscount's was of velvet, and he promised himself that he would have a similar one made on the very next day, intending to add thereto a tassel of gold.

'Well, where is the postillion?' asked the count, impatiently.

'Call the postillion,' cried the valet de chambre.

'It is incredible that the postillion should make himself waited for!' vociferated M. Lerebours, bustling about to give proof of his zeal.

During this time, Isidore passed to the other door in order to look at the pretty marchioness Josephine des Frenays, the Count de Villepreux' niece. She alone was affable towards him, and this reception gave him still more boldness.

'Does not mademoiselle Yseult remember me?' said he, addressing mademoiselle de Villepreux, after having exchanged some words with Josephine.

The pale Yseult looked at him fixedly with an indefinable expression, made a slight inclination of her head, and again cast her eyes upon the guide book she was consulting.

'We used to have fine games of prison-bars in the garden,' resumed Isidore, with the confidence of stupidity.

'And you will have no more,' replied the old count in a freezing tone. 'My grand-daughter does not play at prison-bars now. Come, postillion, a hundred sous for you; on the gallop!'

'For a man who has so much wit,' said the stupified Isidore to himself, as he looked after the berlin, 'that was a very idle sentence. I know very well that his grand-daughter does not play at prison-bars now. Does he think that I do?'

It was but the work of a moment for the elder Lerebours to remount his pony and follow the carriage. If he was sometimes troubled, irresolute on the eve of an occurrence, he was always to be found on a level with his position in great events. He therefore resolutely took a gallop, which had not happened to him for a long time before, nor to his pony either.

'Your papa's *Solognot** runs well!' said the stable-boy, in a tone half simple, half jeering, as he led his black pony to Isidore.

'My *Beauceron** runs better,' replied Isidore, throwing to him a piece of money in a contemptible manner, which he thought contemptuous, and he undertook to mount the pony; but the Beauceron, which had its reasons for not being in good humour, began to draw back and kick up in rather an ominous style. Isidore having brutalized it afresh, it must needs submit; but the Beauceron, feeling the spur tear its side, shot off like lightning, with ears laid back and heart full of vengeance.

* These names are derived from the districts of France in which the ponies are raised.

'Take care not to fall, at least!' cried the stable-boy, catching in the hollow of his hand the small money he had just received.

Isidore, carried by the Beauceron, passed by the berlin with the noise of thunder. The post-horses were frightened and swerved somewhat aside, which drew the old count from his revery and mademoiselle Yseult from her reading.

'That blockhead will break his neck,' said M. de Villepreux with indifference.

'He will make us upset,' replied Yseult, with the same sangfroid.

'That young man has not altered to his advantage,' said the marchioness, with a tone of compassionate goodness which made her companion smile.

Isidore, arrived at a sharp ascent, diminished his speed in order to await the carriage. He was not displeased to show himself to the ladies upon that vigorous beast which shook him impetuously, and which he flattered himself he could make caracol by the door on Yseult's side.

'That little minx was very sulky with me a while ago,' said he to himself; 'she thinks she can treat me like a child; it is well to show her that I am a man, and just now, on seeing me pass at full speed, she must have made some reflections on my good looks.'

The carriage also reached the hill and ascended at a walk. The count, leaning from the window, addressed some questions to his intendant: this was the moment for Isidore to shine in the eyes of the young ladies, who in fact were looking at him. The Beauceron, still quite vexed, seconded, without wishing it, the intentions of his master, by rolling his large eyes and curving his neck in a terrible manner. But an unexpected accident very fatally changed the pride of the rider into anger and confusion. The Beauceron, beaten by him in the stable, and not knowing on whom to avenge himself, had bitten the Grise, a poor, quiet old mare, which was now harnessed, as a third, to the berlin. The Grise no sooner preceived the Beauceron pass and repass beside her than her resentment was awakened. She gave him a kick, to which the pony wished to reply; Isidore cut short the quarrel by applying to his steed vigorous strokes of the whip on the right side and the left; the Beauceron, out of his wits, reared so furiously that the rider was obliged to seize hold of his mane; the postillion, impatient at the misconduct of the Grise, gave a cut with his lash which reached the Beauceron; the latter lost all patience, and passing from leaps to swerves, from starts to reiterated kicks, the valiant Isadore was unhorsed and disappeared in the dust.

'Just as I expected!' said the count, with his imperturbable calmness.

M. Lerebours ran to pick up his son, the good Josephine became pale, the carriage still went on.

'Is he killed?' asked the count of his grandson, who from the height of the box, turning back, could see Isidore's pitiful figure.

'He is only the better for it!' replied the young man, laughing.

The valet-de-chambre and the postillion did the same, especially when they saw the Beauceron, freed from his burden and bounding like a goat, pass beside them and go off at full speed.

'Stop!' said the count, 'perhaps that stupid fellow has been lamed by his fall.'

'It is nothing, it is nothing!' hurriedly cried M. Lerebours on seeing the carriage stop; 'M. the count should not be delayed.'

'But yet,' said the count, 'he must be bruised, and besides, he is on foot; for at the rate his horse goes, he will reach the stable some time before his master. Come, my son will get into the carriage, and your's will take his seat upon the box.'

Isidore, quite red, quite dirty, quite agitated, but endeavouring to laugh and assume a nonchalant air, excused himself; the count insisted with that mixture of bluntness and good-nature which were the foundation of his character.

'Come, come, get up,' said he, in an absolute tone, 'you make us lose time.'

It was necessary to obey. Raoul de Villepreux entered the berlin, and Isidore mounted the box, whence he had leisure to see his horse running in the distance. Even while replying, as he could, to the malicious condolence of the valet-de-chambre, he cast an uneasy glance into the carriage. He then saw that mademoiselle de Villepreux was hiding her face in her handkerchief. Had she been so frightened by his fall as to have a nervous attack? One would have said so from the agitation of her person, until then so stiff and calm. The fact is that she had been seized with a fit of laughter on seeing him re-appear, and, as happens to habitually serious persons, her gaiety was convulsive, inextinguishable. Young Raoul, who, in spite of his nonchalance, and the small extent of his intelligence, was a banterer in cold blood like all his family, kept up his sister's hilarity by a succession of pleasant remarks upon the ridiculous manner in which Isidore had taken his dive. Raoul's slow and monotonous style of speaking made his observations more comical still. The impressible marchioness could not refrain, in spite of the fear she had at first felt, and laughter seized upon her cousin. The count, seeing

the three young people so gay, improved upon the jokes of his grandson with a diabolical coolness. Isidore could hear nothing, but he saw the laugh of Yseult, who, lying back in the carriage, had no longer strength to conceal it. He was so bitterly wounded, that he swore to punish her for it, and an implacable hatred against that young person was enkindled in his vindictive and mean soul.

CHAPTER VII.

STILL Pierre Huguenin continued his journey towards Blois through bye-paths, at one time upon the borders of woods running along the hill-sides, at another through the fields, by the side of high growing grain. Sometimes he seated himself upon the bank of a stream to wash and refresh his burning feet, or under the shadow of a large oak, in the corner of a field, to take his frugal and solitary meal. He was an excellent foot-traveller, and feared neither heat nor fatigue; and yet he with difficulty shortened those delicious halts in the bosom of a rural and poetic solitude. A new world had been revealed to him since his last readings. He understood the melody of a bird, the gracefulness of a branch, the richness of colour, and the beauty of lines in a landscape. He could give a reason for what he had till then felt only confusedly; and the new power with which he was invested produced in him unknown joys and sufferings. 'What good does it do me,' said he frequently to himself, 'to be no longer the same in my mind, if my situation is not to change? This beautiful nature, in which I own nothing, smiles upon me and transports me as much as if I were one of the princes who oppress it. I do not envy the glory of extending and marking my domains upon its mutilated face; but if I am satisfied with a tranquil contemplation—if I ask only to refresh my senses with the perfumes and the harmonies which emanate from it—even this is not permitted me. An indefatigable labourer, I must, from dawn of day till night, water with my sweat a soil which will grow green and flower for other eyes than mine. If I lose an hour each day in feeling my heart and thought live, I shall want bread in my old age, and anxiety for the future will deprive me of all enjoyment in the present. If I stop here an instant too long under the shade, I compromise my honour, bound by a contract to the incessant expenditure of my strength, and to the entire sacrifice of my intellectual life. Well, I must start again; even these reflections are wrong.'

While dreaming thus, Pierre sorrowfully tore himself from these joys of liberty; for to the mechanic liberty is rest. He wishes for no other, and the most industrious is often he who experiences this need in the highest degree. In proportion to the distinction of his nature, he must often curse the continuity of a forced task in which his intelligence has not even time to contemplate and to mature the work of his hands.

Our young joiner required only two days' walking in order to reach Blois. He passed the night at Celles, at a waggoner's inn; and the next day, at the first streak of dawn, resumed his journey. The morning light was still uncertain and pale, when he saw approaching him a man of tall stature, having like himself a blouse and travelling bag; but by his long cane he recognized that he was not of the same society with himself, who carried a short and light one. He was confirmed in this thought, on seeing the man stop twenty paces in front of him, and place himself in the threatening attitude of the *topage*. '*Tope, coterie! quel vocation?*'* cried the stranger, with the voice of a stentor. To this interrogation, Pierre, the laws of whose *Society* forbad the *topage*, gave no answer, and continued to walk straight towards his adversary; for, without any doubt, the meeting would be grievous to one of them. Such are the terrible customs of the companionship.

The stranger, seeing that Pierre did not accept his challenge, likewise concluded that he had to do with an enemy; but, as he must keep himself in the right, he no less continued his questions according to the programme. '*Compagnon?*' cried he, brandishing his cane. As he received no answer, he continued—'*Quel côté? quel devoir?*' (what society? what devoir?) And seeing that Pierre still kept silence, he resumed his advance, and in less than a minute they were face to face.

On seeing the athletic strength and imperious bearing of the stranger, Pierre understood that there would have been no salvation for himself had not nature endowed him, as well as his adversary, with a favourable stature and vigorous limbs. 'Then you are not a workman?' said the stranger to him in a contemptuous tone as soon as he reached him.

'Excuse me,' replied Pierre.

'In that case you are not a companion?' returned the stranger, in a tone more arrogant still; 'why do you presume to carry a cane?'

'I am a companion,' replied Pierre, with much sang-froid;

* Say, fellow-workman, what profession?

'and I request you not to forget it now that you are informed.'

'What do you mean by that? do you intend to insult me?'

'By no means; but I am firmly resolved to reply to you if you provoke me.'

'If you are so brave, why do you refuse the topage?'

'I have my reasons for it, apparently.'

'But do you know that is not the way to answer? Between companions a mutual declaration of the profession and society is due. Come, will you not tell me who you are, and must I compel you?'

'You could not compel me, and it is enough that you testify the intention for me to refuse to satisfy you.'

The stranger muttered between his teeth: 'We shall see;' and grasped his cane convulsively in his hands. But at the moment of commencing the attack he stopped, and his brow clouded as if crossed by a gloomy remembrance. 'Listen,' said he, 'there is no need of so much dissimulation, I see that you are a *gavot*.'*

'If you call me gavot,' replied Pierre, 'I have the right to say that I recognise you as a *dévorant*,* and such are my ideas, that I do not receive your epithet as an insult any more than I intend to insult you by giving you the epithet which belongs to you.'

'You wish to be politic,' retorted the stranger, 'and I see by your prudence that you are a true son of Solomon. Well! I, I glory in belonging to the holy devoir of God, and consequently I am your superior and your older; you owe me respect, and you must make to me sign of submission. On that condition matters will pass quietly between us.'

'I would make no submission to you,' replied Pierre, 'were you Master Jacques in person.'

'You blaspheme!' cried the stranger; 'in that case you belong to no constituted society. You have no *devoir*, or else you are a revolter, an independent, a *Renard de liberté* (Fox of liberty), the most despicable creature in the world.'

'I am nothing of all that,' replied Pierre, smiling.

'Gavot, gavot, in that case!' cried the stranger, stamping with his foot. 'Listen, whoever you may be, *Coterie*, *Pays*, or *Monsieur*,† you have no desire to fight, nor I either; and I am willing to believe that it is no more from cowardice on your part than on mine. I know that there are very courageous persons among the gavots, and that prudence is

* These are the rather contemptuous names by which the rival societies call each other.

† Club, country, or Sir, titles used by members of various trades when addressing each other.

not in all, without exception, a false pretence of wisdom to hide their want of heart. As to myself, you will not suppose me a coward when I have told you my name, as I will do: you have perhaps heard of me *on the tour of France.* I am Jean Sauvage, called *La terreur des gavots* (The terror of the gavots), *of Carcassonne.*'

'You are,' said Pierre Huguenin, 'a stone-cutter, *compagnon passant* (travelling journeyman). I have heard you mentioned as a brave and industrious man; but you are accused of being quarrelsome and loving wine.'

'And if you are so well acquainted with my faults,' replied Jean Sauvage, 'you must also know the unfortunate adventure which happened to me at Montpellier, with a young man who undertook to tell me too much.'

'I know that you so maltreated him that he is disabled; and that, if the companions on both sides had not had the generosity to keep the matter secret, the public authorities would have made you sorely repent it, whether your conscience did or not.'

The devorant, angry at the freedom with which Pierre spoke to him, became pale with rage, and raised his cane anew. Pierre, seizing his, awaited with cool and reflecting bravery the explosion of his fury. But suddenly the stone-cutter let his cane fall, and his face assumed a noble and sad expression.

'Know, Sir,' said he, 'that I have well expiated a moment of delirium; for if fiery and irritable, know that I am not a brute beast, a cruel animal, as your gavots are doubtless pleased to have believed. I have wept bitterly for my fault, and have done all in my power to repair it. But the young man whom I injured is not the less unable to work for the rest of his days, and I am not rich enough to maintain his father, his mother, and his sisters, whose only support he was. Therefore a whole family is wretched from my act, and the assistance which I send them while working with all my strength, is not enough to give them the comforts they ought to have. For I also have parents, and half my earnings belong to them. This is why, labouring for two families, I can lay up nothing for myself; and people take me for a drunkard and spendthrift, without imagining the efforts I have made to correct myself, and the triumphs I have gained over my evil inclinations. Now that you know my history, you will not be astonished at what I still have to say. I have made an oath never to seek a quarrel with any one, and to do all to avoid new misfortunes. Still I cannot be resigned to pass for a coward, and the honour of my devoir, the glory of the children of Master Jacques, must prevail over my scruples. You have spoken to me with an assurance which I do not

wish to chastise, and which still I cannot put up with. Consent not to tell me who you are, since you appear to have reasons for concealing it; but confess, at least, by a simple declaration, *that there is but one devoir*, and that that devoir is the oldest of all.'

'If there be but one,' replied Pierre, smiling, 'it is evident that there is no older; and if you require me to acknowledge yours as the oldest of all, that is compelling me to acknowledge that it is not the only one.'

The devorant was singularly mortified by his raillery, and all his anger was again excited. 'I recognise there,' said he, biting his lips, 'the insufferable dissimulation of your society. You have, nevertheless, clearly understood my proposition, and you see that I am conscious of the existence of false devoirs which insolently assume the same title with ourselves. But be sure that we will never consent to it, and that the gavots will cease to call themselves companions of the devoir, or that they will repent having done so.'

'They do not give themselves that name,' replied Pierre; 'they call themselves companions of the *devoir of liberty*, precisely in order not to be confounded with your devorants, who are not partisans of any liberty, as all know.'

'And you, you are partisans of the liberty of stealing the name and titles of others. It is from this that you must abstain. We shall carry on the war with you even unto death, or, until you are compelled to entitle yourselves *companions of liberty*, simply.'

'I confess to you that if it depended on me,' replied Pierre, 'there would be no dispute about so small a matter. The word liberty is so beautiful that it appears to me sufficient to render illustrious those who bear it on their banner. But I do not think the quarrel can be thus settled so long as your party continue to demand it with insults and threats. Thus, so far as concerns myself, be sure that no companion of any devoir will ever compel me, by such means, to proclaim the ancientness and the superiority of his party over any party whatsoever.'

'Ah! then you are not a companion? I see that, for an hour, you have been laughing at me, and that you have no preference for any colour. This proves to me that you are an Independent or a Revolter: perhaps you have even been driven from some society for your bad conduct. I shall know you, and if that is so, will unmask you in any place where I meet you.'

'All your words are hostile, and yet I remain calm. Your speech breathes hatred, and does not provoke mine; you threaten me, and obtain from me only a smile: any one who, without knowing us, should see us thus, would not be led to

consider you as the most noble and the wiser of the two. I do not understand why, instead of seeking your glory in words of cursing and deeds of violence, you do not seek it in wise practises and the sentiments of humanity.'

'You are a fine talker, from what I see. Well, so be it; I do not hate well-informed persons, and have myself endeavoured to throw off the burden of my ignorance; I have adorned my memory with the best songs of our poets, and, though I do not accept the spirit of yours, I render justice to the talents of some of your songsters. I know that if we have *Va-sans craintre* (Go without fear) *de Bordeaux**, *Vendôme la clef des cœurs* (The key of hearts), and so many others, you have *Marseillais bon Accord* (Good harmony), *Bordelais la Prudence*, *Bourguignon la Fidélitè*, *Nantais Prèt a bien faire* (Ready to do good), &c., who are not without talent. But I have recognized with sorrow, I confess, that it is impossible to beat at once an *author* and a good workman. In order to rhyme, one must learn a great many things which require time, and consequently make one lose it. It is on account of your fine words that I fear that you may be a man overwhelmed with debt, having broken your ban, or betrayed your devoir, a *brûleur* (burner), in one word."

'That fear does not disturb me,' replied Pierre; 'we shall perhaps meet elsewhere and in more cordial relations than your present manners seem to desire. Are you willing to let me depart? I cannot stop any longer.

'You are a very prudent man,' returned the obstinate stonecutter, 'but I am one too, and I do not wish to compromise my reputation by letting you continue your journey in that manner.'

'Will you tell me how a peaceful meeting with a companion on a journey can affect your honour?'

'The gavots are so arrogant towards us (especially out of our presence) that they never fail to say that they have made any one of ours lower his tone when they meet on the *tour of France*. When they have not been able to give proofs of their courage in public, they boast of prowesses which have had no witnesses.'

'Do not the devorants also boast sometimes? Have you neither imposters nor false braves in your society? If so, you are very lucky.'

'Doubtless, there are everywhere bad heads and bad tongues; but you have nothing to fear from my statements, since you know my name, while you refuse to tell me yours. Who will answer to me for your sincerity? Who will hinder

* The Companions add to a significative surname that which designates their country or their native village.

you from saying at Blois, where you are no doubt going, "I met on my road *la terreur des gavots, of Carcassonne*, and I humiliated him in words without his daring to reply to me?" or else, "I refused the topage to a *compagnon passant*, and, as he insisted, I made him bite the dust?" I care little for the opinion of your associates; but I cannot do without the esteem of mine. And what would they think of me if such reports were brought to them? Have not your people already tried to injure me? Has it not been said that, since the affair at Montpellier, excessive remorse had destroyed my courage? it is on this account that, in spite of the sorrow I experience, I am compelled, for the sake of my honour, not to give way to any one of yours. Come, let us have an end of this, make yourself known.'

'My name will give you no guarantee,' replied Pierre. 'It is not illustrious like your own. But if my silence gives rise to your suspicions, I consent to speak, declaring to you that I do not mean, by so doing, to yield to an order from you, but to the counsels of my reason. My name is Pierre Huguenin.'

'Wait a moment! Is it not you who have received the surname of *l'ami du trait* (the friend of draughting) in consequence of your knowledge of geometry? Have you not been first companion at Nimes?'

'Exactly. Have we ever met before?'

'No; but you left that city as I arrived, and I have heard of you. You are a skilful joiner, they say, and a good fellow; but you are a gavot, friend, a real gavot,'

'And you,' replied Pierre Huguenin, 'I know you now; you are a man of heart. Your remorse for the affair at Montpellier, and the assistance you send to the family of *Hyppolite the sincere*, have proved it to me. But you are full of pride and prejudices, and if you do not shake off those miserable bonds, you will lay up for yourself many other regrets.'

'You pronounce a name which awakens many sufferings,' returned Sauvage. 'If I had been allowed, I should have abjured my name' *La terreur des gavots* for one which was in my head at that time. I wished to call myself *Le cœur brisé* (The broken heart). The Devoir did not permit me, and it did well, for I should have been laughed at.'

'That is possible; but I esteem you for having had the thought.'

'If you were not of Solomon, you would not be so touched by that. If I had killed a *renard du père Soubise* (one of father Soubise's foxes), you would be very indifferent, and yet I should not reproach myself any less.'

'I should consider you quite as culpable for having done it, and esteem you equally for repairing it as you do.'

'Why is this? Are you dissatisfied with your gavots?'

'By no means. But I am, like you, the son of a master more humane and more illustrious than Solomon or Jacques.'

'What do you mean? Is there a new society which boasts a founder more famous than ours?'

'Yes. There is a society greater than that of the gavots and the devorants; it is human society. There is a master more illustrious than all those of the Temple, and all the kings of Jerusalem and Tyre: it is God. There is a devoir more noble, more true than all those of the initiations and the mysteries: it is the devoir (duty) of brotherhood among men.'

Jean, the devorant, remained speechless, and looked at Pierre, the gavot, with an air, half-mistrusting, half-convinced. At last he approached him and made a gesture as if he would extend his hand; but he could not resolve to do so, and withdrew it at once.

'You are a singular man,' said he, 'and the words you speak enchain me in spite of myself. It seems to me that you have reflected much upon matters with which I have not had time to busy myself, and which, nevertheless, have tormented me like cries of my conscience. If you were not a gavot, it seems to me that I should like to know you ultimately, and to hear you speak of what you know; but my honour prevents my contracting friendship with you. Adieu! May you open your eyes to the abominations of your devoir of liberty, and come to us who alone possess the ancient, the true, the *tres-saint devoir de Dieu* (very holy devoir of God). If you had chosen the good path, I should have been happy to have got you admitted, and to serve as your pledge and godfather. Your name would have been Pierre *the Philosopher*.'

Thus the two companions separated, each carrying with him the thought, but each in a different degree, that these distinctions and these enmities of the companionship stifle many lights and destroy many sympathies.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOWARDS evening, Pierre Huguenin reached the banks of the Loire. At the sight of that beautiful stream which slowly glides on its peaceful course in the midst of the meadows, he felt as if suddenly relieved from the overpowering heat of the day, and he walked for some time on the fine sand, in a path traced among the osiers of the bank. He could already perceive in the distance the black clock-towers of Blois, and the high walls of that gloomy chateau in which the Guises pe-

rished, and whence, at a later day, escaped Mary de Medicis, held a prisoner by her own son. But in vain did he double his speed; he soon saw that it would be impossible for him to arrive before the storm. The sky was loaded with heavy clouds, the leaden tints of which were reflected by the water. The osiers and willows of the bank whitened under the wind, and large drops of rain began to fall. He directed his steps towards a clump of trees, in order to seek shelter there; and soon, through the thicket, he distinguished a small house, quite poor but neat, which by its bunch of holly he recognised as one of those lodging places called *bouchons* (corks) in common parlance.

He entered, and hardly had he passed the threshold when he was received with an exclamation of joy: '*Villepreux*; *l'Ami-du trait*!' cried the host of that isolated dwelling: 'you are welcome, my child!'

Surprised at hearing himself addressed by his gavot name, Pierre, whose eyes were not yet accustomed to the obscurity which prevailed in the cabin, replied; 'I hear a friendly voice, and yet I know not where I am.'

'In the house of your faithful companion, of your brother *of liberty*,' returned the host, approaching him with open arms: 'in the house of *Vaudois la-Sagesse*' (Wisdom.)

'Of my ancient, of my venerable!' cried Pierre, advancing towards the old companion, and they embraced each other closely; but Pierre immediately recoiled a step, uttering a sorrowful exclamation: *Vaudois la Sagesse* had a wooden leg.

'Eh! Mon Dieu, yes!' returned the honest man, 'that is what happened to me by falling from the roof to the pavement. I was obliged to leave my business as a carpenter, and my leg at the hospital. But I was not abandoned. Our brave brothers made a subscription, and with the product of their collection I was enabled to buy a small stock as a wine-merchant, and to hire this hovel, where I do a tolerably good business. The Loire fishermen and the country cheese makers never fail to take a small glass here as they return home, after having sold their produce at the market of Blois. They call me *Jambe du-bois* (wooden-leg); but our old friends, the good companions who live in the district, and who often come on Sundays to eat fresh fish and drink mountain wine under my arbour of hops, call my *bush* the bower of wisdom. Those are my holidays. While pouring out for them, with moderation, my nectar at two sous the pint, I preach to them wisdom, union, industry, the study of designing: and they listen to me with the same deference as formerly. We sing together our old ballads, the glory of Solomon, the advantages of the beautiful *devoir of liberty* and of the beautiful *tour of France*, the misfortunes of our fathers in captivity, farewells to home,

the charms of our mistresses. Ah! as to these last songs, I no longer sing with them—Cupid and a wooden leg don't chime well together; but I still smile at their loves, and only proscribe from our pleasant meetings the songs of war, and satires; for wisdom does not halt, and mine walks always on two legs. You see that I am not so unfortunate.'

'My poor Vaudois!' relied Pierre, 'I see with pleasure that you have preserved your courage and your goodness. But I cannot reconcile myself to the idea of that leg which will no longer carry you upon the ladders and upon the beams of the roofs. You, so good a workman, so skilful in your art, so useful to the young people of your profession!'

'I am still useful to them,' returned Vaudois-la-Sagesse; 'I give them advice and lessons. They rarely undertake a job of any importance without coming to consult me. Several have offered to pay me for a course of lessons in designing, but I give it to them gratis. It would be fine indeed, if, after they had assessed themselves in order to procure my establishment for me, I should not show myself grateful and disinterested towards them! It is quite enough, it is too much indeed, for them to pay their scot here. So how satisfied I am, how proud, when I see any of them pass before my door and refuse to enter, for want of money in the pocket? That happens sometimes; then I take them by the collar, I force them to sit under my hop vine, and, whether they will or no, they are obliged to eat and drink. Brave youth! what a future opens before those souls!'

'A future of courage, of perseverance, of talent, of labour, of misery, and of sorrow!' said Pierre, seating himself upon a bench, and throwing his bundle upon the table with a deep sigh.

'What is that I hear?' cried Jambe-du-bois; 'Oh, ho! I see that my son *l'Ami-du-trait* wants wisdom. I do not like to see young people melancholy. You should pass an hour or two with me, pays Villepreux; and to begin, we will lunch together.'

'With all my heart; the smallest matter is enough for me,' replied Pierre, seeing him hurry to his cupboard.

'You do not command here, my young master,' returned the carpenter, cheerfully. 'You will not make your bill of fare; for you are not at an inn, but in the house of your ancient, who invites and treats you.'

Then Jambe-du-bois, with wonderful agility, began to run into all the corners of his house and garden. He took from his fish-box two fine tenches, which he put into the pan; and the fry began to murmur and to sing upon the fire, while the rain beat against the window in cadence, and the Loire, lashed by the storm, growled without. Pierre wished to

hinder his host from taking all this trouble; but when he saw that he had so much pleasure in entertaining him he assisted him in his functions as landlord and cook.

They were about to seat themselves at table when some one knocked at the door.

'Go and open, if you please,' said the Vaudois to his guest, 'and do the honours of the house.'

But he almost let fall the smoking dish he held in his hand when he saw *l'Ami-du-trait* and the new comer throw themselves upon each other's neck with transport. This traveller, covered with mud and wet to his bones, was no other than the excellent journeyman joiner, Amaury, called *Nantais-le-Corinthien* (The Corinthian of Nantes,) one of the firmest supporters of the devoir of liberty, Pierre Huguenin's dearest friend, and moreover one of the handsomest youths upon the tour of France.

'This is then the day of meetings!' cried Vaudois, to whom Pierre had related his adventure with *la Terreur des gavots of Carcassone*. 'This is one of our brothers, doubtless, for you give him a very hearty welcome.'

As soon as the Vaudois knew that his guest was a friend of Pierre and a child of his *devoir*, he made his fire blaze up, invited the Corinthian to approach, and even lent him a vest, for fear he should take cold, while his own was drying.

While the young man was warming himself, for every stormy rain is cold, though it be in summer, the sun re-appeared in the dark sky, the clouds slowly flew away to the east, and the rainbow, reflected in the Loire, raised a sublime bridge from the water to the firmament. Soon the weather was so pure, the air so sweet and the earth so smiling, after this generous shower, that the happy companions spread their table under the arbour. Some drops of rain did indeed fall, from the chalice of the wet flowers, upon the bread of the travellers; but it did not appear less good to them. Father Vandois' honeysuckles emitted a sweet perfume, his tame blackbird sang with a melodious voice upon a neigbouring thicket, the sun descended towards the horizon, the Loire was on fire, and the fish described in its waters a thousand sparkling circles. This beautiful evening, the joy of again meeting to such perfect friends, the animation which the wine, not very delicate to be sure, but natural and pure from all fraud, caused to circulate in his veins, the wise discourse of the Vaudois, the amiable expression of Amaury, all contributed to elevate to the highest regions the noble thoughts of Pierre Huguenin, or of *Villepreux, l'Ami-du-trait*, as his companions called him.

But in proportion as the evening darkened around him, he again became sad. His voice no longer mingled with those

of his comrades to celebrate the *happy meeting*, the *delights of a wandering life, the glory of the joiner's art*, and all those fine sentiments which I inspire the companions with songs so simple and often so poetical. Amaury, who had often seen him dreamy, was not at all astonished; but the Vaudois, who was a man of the good old time, and who knew nothing about melancholy, reproached him with this.

'Young man,' said he, 'why does your brow become dark at the same time with the horizon? Do you believe that the sun will not rise to-morrow? has friendship no power over you but for an hour? Have you too much mind and science to take satisfaction in the gaiety of your comrades? Come! Why do those sighs escape you, and why are your looks turned from us? Have you any sorrow? You have told us that on returning from your travels you found your old father in good health, that you live in a good understanding with him, that work does not fail you: what do you desire then?'

'I do not know,' replied Pierre. 'have no reason to complain of my lot, and yet I do not feel so happy as I was before I left my village, and during the first years of my tour of France. Since I have looked into other books than those which belong exclusively to my profession, I have felt myself agitated, at one moment by exalted joys, at another by bitter sufferings. I can bear witness for myself, that I have not given way to these vain emotions; but I have felt them deeply, and have never entirely recovered from them. I think of too many things to be absorbed in the enjoyment of one alone.—The honest pleasures of repose and the cheerfulness of a society so delightful as yours cannot captivate my soul beyond a certain time; this is wrong—it is a disease, a vice, perhaps. But I always feel within me something which urges and overpowers me; I hear a low voice which says to me: Onward, work; do not stop here, be not content with that; you have everything to learn, everything to do, everything to overcome, in order to fill your life as you ought. But as soon as I return to my work, a horrible depression, a mortal fear seizes upon me, The voice says to me: What are you doing there? Of what use is your labour? Whither do your efforts tend? do you think you can be more skilful than another? do you hope to change your destiny by wearing out your strength and your days in this rude work? is your future so magnificent that you must sacrifice to it the enjoyment of the present? And in this alternation of ardour and disgust, my life flows away like a confused dream of which my memory can retain no phase, but of which the fatigue only is felt. O my friends! explain to me the evil that consumes me. If I am culpable (and I think so, for I am not without remorse), enlighten me, and guide me in the good way.'

Amaury the Corinthian listened to these words with a sympathising sadness, and the Vaudois with a profound astonishment. The young man understood this suffering without sharing it. Less initiated than l'Ami-du-trait into the anguishes of reflection, he was nevertheless enough so to understand the causes of his evil; but the invalid, a philosopher by nature, tranquil from good sense, and contented from habit, could not explain to himself the uneasiness which belonged to the new generation.

'It must be that you have some burden on your conscience too heavy to be borne,' replied he to Pierre, 'or your love of study has led you to ambition. I have known some ambitious young men who, in consequence of wishing to raise themselves above their true position, have remained below what they might have attained with more simplicity and resignation. I believe, my poor Villepreux, that you desire riches or reputation beyond measure. You wish that your name should surpass all the *illustrious* names upon the tour of France; or else you dream of a fortune, a fine house, lands, a great establishment. All this may be yours, since you have talent, zeal, a father well established, a small inheritance to receive, as you yourself confess. So many advantages ought to be enough to make you contented. But this is a thing I have often remarked, and which I do not understand: the more a man possesses, the more he desires; the more he succeeds, the more he wishes to undertake; and the more obstacles he has overcome, the more new ones he creates for himself. It is perhaps a favour of Providence to deprive of desire those who have no chance of hope. If you want a *stoic*, look after a beggar. I have been told that the founder of that system was a slave. I have forgotten his name; but he must have been really a poor devil, since he had so much reason and patience. Well! it is very certain, that wealth is a great misfortune, science a fatal poison, genius a bad fever. And yet we must have all these; and all of us, whatever we are, run after them.'

When Vaudois-la-Sagesse had pronounced this decision, which Pierre listened to with sadness and attention, Amaury, consulted by the eyes of his friend, spoke in his turn.

'As for me,' said he, 'without offending you, I think that ambition is not an evil, and that success is not a crime. Why do we study? it is to advance in science; and when we obtain a little, we apply it to build up our fortune. And why do we seek to secure riches? it is to attain repose. Take from us all these desires, all these necessities: what are we? ignorant, idle, even when we are only these; for rudeness engenders rudeness, and "lazy" among us means a drunkard, a debauchee, a brute, a man *without heart*. Now! father

Vaudois! you have attained repose. Your infirmity prevents you from labouring; but the esteem of your brothers has restored to you that which was your due, that which you would have acquired by yourself: this is just. You are therefore in a condition of comfort which is legitimate, and which you may look upon as your own work, since the man who works well and conducts himself well, has right to a recompense. Tell us now how you pass your time at present, and what employs your mind during those hours in which your customers do not keep you busy. You read—for there are books upon a shelf; you draw plans for carpenters' work —for here are some pretty models and good coloured designs. You apply yourself to poetry, for you have collected with care all the songs of your devoir; you know them by heart, and here are sheets written by your hand (and very well written too, truly!) in which you have restored to the old authors, all which the poor memory or the ignorance of vulgar singers had mutilated or corrupted. You have not, therefore, stopped in the middle of your life sadly to obey the fatality which would have made you impotent, solitary, useless, and desolate. You have, on the contrary, made a new bargain with the future; you have cultivated your understanding, improved your writing, and perfected your orthography; enriched your memory, studied science, morals, even politics; for I have seen all this in you. In fine, you have obeyed a secret ambition which forbade your yielding to the stroke of adversity, and which was not contented with the pleasures of the table and the profits of your little business. You are therefore ambitious, a dreamer, a fool, you also, with all your wisdom? Come, answer that, my philosopher!

'Villepreux, your friend talks like a book,' said the Vaudois, a little flattered in secret by the praises he received under the form of a dilemma; 'and I see that he is right; for I should be sadly weary in my solitude if I had not a taste for books, for old and new songs, for almanacks, and instructive conversations with the travellers who stop under my bower. But why do I find so much amusement in all this? I may, indeed, be ambitious, but you will allow that I am not sad. I have never experienced the sufferings of which l'Ami-du-trait speaks; I have never been unhappy more than once in my life; that was when I saw my poor leg go from my bed without me, and I said to myself, that my arms and my head were of no further use. But my friends came, proved to me that they were still of use, and I have not forgotten it! Still, one regret, one desire disturbs me. I should like once more to see my mountain, my Pays de Vaud, my Switzerland, though I now know almost nobody there. But in fine, that is a dream, and, bound as I am to the banks of

the Loire by gratitude and friendship, I do sigh a little. I look at the sunset clouds which heap up below there in great white, golden, silvery, purple masses, like Mount Blanc. Here, in my garden, is a little brook which I have dug out myself, and which I call the Rhone. This hillock, which I have planted with rose-trees and lilacs, is the Jura. All this amuses and consoles me. Sometimes a tear fills my eyes, and I then make some verses and sing them; and I am happy, take it all in all. There are two kinds of ambition: one which suffers always and is never contented with anything; another which rejoices the soul and is satisfied with little. Couldn't you take mine, *pays Villepreux*?'

'You have both said very true things,' replied Pierre Huguenin, 'and yet neither of you has laid your finger on my wound. I am no better surgeon than you, and my heart bleeds without my knowing whence escape my blood, my hope and life. Yet I can take an oath before God and before you: it is, that I desire nothing beyond my condition, if it be not some hours more each week to devote to meditation and reading. Neither glory nor riches tempt me, I swear it again and upon my honour! Think you that the slight privation of which I complain is enough to make me unhappy? I do not think so. The source of the evil is higher. Perhaps this mystery will be solved with time. Until then I will suffer in silence, this I promise you, and will not seek to discourage others.'

CHAPTER IX.

When it was quite dark, Pierre prepared to leave for Blois with Amaury, who was also going there. He had not wished to disturb the philosophical conversation at supper by the discussion of his own business; but he longed to be alone with his friend. The Vaudois besought them both to pass the night under his roof; but they alleged that their moments were counted. The Corinthian promised that, if he remained at Blois, as was his intention, he would often return to empty a bottle of beer under the Bower of wisdom; and Pierre, who thought of resuming the road to his village as soon as possible, agreed to stop some moments on his return to clasp, in passing, the hand of the old carpenter. The osiers through which the path winds had been inundated, in several places, by the storm. The invalid pointed out to them a safer path, and guided them himself for a quarter of a

league, leading the way with remarkable agility and address. When he had put them on the road, he wished them good night and good luck.

'Well!' said he to them, 'I shall see you again soon, for, certainly, you will both remain there. I shall go to see you, if you do not come to me. I do not often go to the city, but there are occasions—and that which is preparing—'

'What occasion?' asked l'Ami-du-trait.

'It is well, it is well,' returned Vaudois. 'You are right not to speak of that. I am not of your trade, and am supposed to know nothing about it. I honour discretion, and do not wish to confound it with mistrust in what relates to me; though, after all, when we belong to the same devoir, we might well confide certain things to each other. No matter! the affair is still a secret, and you will do well not to talk about it before it is made public. Till we meet again, then, and may the great Solomon be with you! The moon has risen; take the right hand, then the left, and then straight on till you reach the highway.'

He clasped their hands and resumed the road to his cottage. But the two friends long heard his manly and strongly accented voice sing, as it was lost by degrees, these last verses of a long and simple song of which he was the author:

Once on the glorious tour of France
I travelled far with wandering feet,
I never went in diligence—
Strong legs and twenty years were fleet.
Good looks I had, without pretence,
Labour and love and pleasures sweet:
Hope now remains for my defence,
A joyous heart, good eyes and feet.

Friends, on the glorious tour of France
I well have tired my dusty feet,
And in the workshops of Provence
Have worn my arms in labour sweet.
Long nights I've passed in *dreams of science*,
And thus have flown my pleasures sweet;
Now in the arms of Providence
My pious heart repose can meet.

'Worthy and honest man!' said Pierre, stopping to listen to him. 'Amaury, Amaury, is it not beautiful to hear the song of a good man? That manly and strong voice which fills the air, throwing its artless rhymes to all the echoes, is it not like a triumphant hymn of the conscience? Here we are upon the highway: does that fine carriage which rolls so smoothly bear such pure hearts? No! not a human voice

escapes from that travelling mansion, in which all the comforts of life accompany the rich. There is a trader upon a good and strong horse; he carries a heavy valise, and the handles of his pistols glitter in the moonlight. Yet, see! he fears us, he suspects us—he draws his horse's bridle, and takes the other side of the road in order to avoid passing near us. His horse is laden with gold, and his soul with care; his journey is anxious and silent. Poor trafficker, do you hear that joyous cadence, there at the bottom of the ravine of the Loire? Do you suppose that such an echoing song can come from an invalided old man without family, without money, without weapons, and without support other than a wooden leg and the hearts of some friends as poor as himself?'

'What you say strikes me,' returned Amaury, 'and, I know not why, my eyes fill with tears on hearing that song. Explain this to me, Pierre, you who explain so many things.'

'God is great, and man also!' replied Pierre, with a sigh.

'What do you mean by that?' asked his comrade.

'There would be too much to say, my Corinthian, and the best way will be to talk of something else,' said l'Ami-du-trait, resuming his walk. 'You must explain to me the last words which the Vaudois said on leaving us. I do not know to what great affair and great secret he referred.'

'How!' cried Amaury, 'do you not know what is doing at Blois between the devorants and us? I thought that you had received a letter of notice, and that you were going to the meeting of our brothers.'

'I am going to Blois on business which is entirely personal, and of which the half is accomplished, my friend, unless I flatter myself with a vain hope.'

Here Pierre explained to the Corinthian the need he had of two good workmen to assist him in his undertaking, and communicated his desire to commence his enlisting with him. He praised the beauty of the work in which he wished to associate him, made to him very advantageous offers, and besought him not to reject them.

'Certainly, it would be a great satisfaction to my heart to work with you,' replied Amaury, 'and your offers surpass my demands; but you shall yourself to judge if I can make use of my liberty at this moment. Learn, then, that our devoir of liberty is about to play the city of Blois against the *devoir devorant*.'

As all our readers will not perhaps understand, as well as Pierre Huguenin was enabled to do, this strange revelation, we will explain it to them in a few words. When two rival societies have established their devoirs in a city, they can seldom remain at peace. The least infraction of the truce silently agreed upon produces violent ruptures. On the least

occasion, and sometimes without occasion, they contend for the exclusive occupation of the city, and the contention sometimes lasts for years in the midst of bloody episodes. At last, when disputes, oratorical debates, and blows have decided nothing between parties equal in obstinacy, in strength and demands, there is a final way of settling the question: this is, to play the city, that is to say, the right to occupy the place and obtain the work, to the exclusion of the losing party. It is now one hundred and ten years (this is a historical fact) since the stone-cutters of Solomon, otherwise called *compagnons étrangers* or *loups* (foreign journeymen or wolves,) played the city of Lyons for a hundred years against the stone-cutters of Master Jacques, called *compagnons passants or loups-garous* (travelling journeymen or man-wolves). The last lost it, and, for one hundred years, the compact was religiously observed. No compagnon passant set foot upon the domain of the compagnons étrangers. But, latterly, the term of the treaty having expired, the banished thought they had a right to return and exploit* a country which had again become free. The children of Solomon were not of the same opinion; they found their position a good one, and pretended that a hundred years' possession must give them an imprescriptible right. The two societies parleyed, they could not come to an understanding; they fought; the authorities intervened to separate the combatants. Several champions of both parties had committed such excesses that they were sent to prison, even to the galleys. But the law, not protecting and not acknowledging this method of the organization of labour in masonic societies, could not decide the dispute. The case is still pending in the secret tribunals of the companionship, and it is to be feared that many heroes of the tour of France may yet lose their blood or their liberty upon this question. Let us hope that the philosophical attempts of some among those companions, enlightened and generous minds, who have recently undertaken the great work of union among all the rival devoirs, will yet overcome the prejudices against which they have to contend, and will cause the principle of fraternity to triumph.

We have still a word to say respecting the nature of the trial to which these differences have hitherto been submitted. Recourse is not had to chance, but to competition. On each side a piece of work is executed, equivalent to what, in the

* The French verb *exploiter* means to farm, to improve, to speculate upon, to employ the labour of another, these two last generally in a bad sense; as there is no corresponding word in English, I have thought it best to use one derived from the French, having therein the support of a very eminent authority.—TRANS.

ancient wardenships of the trades, was called the *master piece.* It is well known that, in the former organization by brotherhoods or corporations, no one could be admitted to the mastership without having presented that piece to the judgment of the syndics, skilful craftsmen, sworn to ascertain the capacity of the aspirant.* Hoffmann has devoted one of his tales (that which he could, by good right, have himself called his masterpiece), *Master Martin the Cooper*, to poetizing that beautiful phase of an apprentice's life, which embraces his presentation to the mastership, the execution of the master-piece, the reception of the new master, &c. Now that the mastership is no longer an acquired and disputed right, but a free and optional fact, we do not see the master-piece re-appear publicly except in the challenges of the companionship. When they determine to play a city, the competition is undertaken. Each party chooses, among its most skilful members, one or several champions, who labour with ardour to confound the pride of their rivals by the production of a difficult piece proposed for competition. The jury is composed of arbiters chosen indifferently from the several devoirs, and sometimes from among masters unconnected with any society; or old companions retired from the association, and considered incorruptible; and most frequently from among those of the profession. Their sentence is without appeal. Whatever dissatisfaction, whatever secret murmurs it may occasion, the party vanquished in its representative is obliged to leave the place for a longer or shorter time, according to the arrangements agreed upon before the trial.

Such was the decisive crisis in which the devoirs of Blois were placed at the time of Pierre and Amaury's arrival. The gavots, who had occupied Blois for a few years only, made violent struggles to maintain themselves there against the other more anciently established societies. The war had already broken out at several points. The carpenters called *Drilles*, or *du père Soubise*, were not less inveterate against the gavot joiners than were the dévorant joiners. In face of so many threatening enemies, the gavots had thought to protect themselves from the violence of the dévorants, at least, by the truce required for a competition; and, with respect to the carpenters, they hoped to keep them respectful by a haughty and courageous attitude. Amaury, being one of the best joiners among the gavots, had been sent for by the

* The organization here referred to still prevails in some parts of Europe; and from the time and labour required to produce the master-piece, its operation is to keep many skilful workmen always dependent as journeymen. It is also still required in some associations for the reception of the compagnon.

council of his order; and prepared himself, with a strong emotion of fear and joy, to enter the lists with several artizans of merit, his emulators, against the elect of the dévorant artists.

It was not without some pride that he confided this to his friend; but he immediately added with an affectionate and sincere modesty:

'I am much astonished, dear Villepreux, at being called, and seeing that you have not been; for, if there is a workman superior to all others, and in all things, it is not the Corinthian, but indeed l'Ami-du trait.'

'I accept that eulogium only as a sweet and generous illusion of your friendship for me,' replied Pierre. 'And even if I should be so foolish as to believe in the merit which you attribute to me, I should have no reason to complain of the forgetfulness in which I have been left. That forgetfulness I have sought for, I confess to you, and I should not leave it without strong opposition on my own part. When, after four years of pilgrimage, I again took the road to my village, I so arranged it that my withdrawal was not remarked upon the tour of France. I made no solemn farewells; I departed one fine morning, after having fulfilled all my engagements, and repaid all services rendered by equivalent services. I do not think that any one has any reproach to make against me; and, if I am accused of a little eccentricity, no one can accuse me of ingratitude. I felt the need of leaving this agitated life, I thirsted for my native air. Everything that retained me a single day seemed to be constraint; and, during the two months I have been working with my father, I have not renewed my connexion with any of my old friends.'

'Not even with me?' said Amaury, in a tone of reproach.

'I depended upon the Providence which reunites this day, and I experience so great a necessity of living near you, that I cannot conceive a sweeter joy than that of carrying you with me, if possible. But it is not always a solace to write to those you love, when you are suffering. Far the contrary, there are certain moral situations in which you do not dare to express your feelings, for fear of discouraging yourself, or discouraging those who are dear to you. Could I, moreover, have made you understand a melancholy which I do not myself understand? You would have had the same suspicions respecting me which Vaudois expressed just now. A letter can never take place of the effusion of an interview.'

'That is true' said Amaury, 'but if your conduct is natural in this, the sadness which dictated it is more and more strange to my eyes. I have always known you grave, reflecting, sober, and avoiding tumult; but I saw you so cordial, so benevolent, so ardent in friendship, that I do not understand

your present savageness and the kind of estrangement you testify for the devoir. Have you suffered any injustice? You know that in such a case you have a right to reparation. The council is assembled, the complaints are made, and the chief of the society decides equitably.'

'On the contrary, I have had only reason to be satisfied with my companions,' replied Pierre. 'I esteem almost all those whom I have been specially acquainted with, and I love some of them ardently. I believe that my devoir is the best organized and the most honourable of all; it was on this account that, after a certain examination of the customs and regulations, I embraced it in preference to the others, in which I seemed to see less liberal usages, a less advanced civilization. It is possible I may have been deceived, but I acted in the loyalty of my heart, when I enrolled myself under the white and blue banner. Our laws proscribe the topage, howlings; and, if the general custom still compels us to cross canes often, at least the spirit of our institution seems to forbid those fanatical provocations which the spirit of the other societies proclaims and sanctions. But if you absolutely wish me to confide to you the causes of the secret disgust which has seized upon me, I will open to you my whole heart. I would not wish to chill your enthusiasm, or to shake in you that lively faith in the devoir, which is the mover and spring in the life of a companion. Still I must indeed confess to you how far that faith has departed from me. Alas, yes! the sacred fire of the esprit du corps abandons me more and more. In proportion as I become enlightened respecting the true history of the people, the fable of the temple of Solomon seems to me a childish mystery, a gross allegory. The feeling of a destiny common to all who labour is revealed in me, and this barbarous custom of creating distinctions, castes, inimical camps between us all, appears to me more and more savage and fatal. What! is it not enough that we have for natural enemies all those who exploit our labours for their profit? Must we still devour each other? Oppressed by the cupidity of the rich, reduced by the weak pride of the nobles into a supposedly abject condition, compelled by the cowardly complicity of the priests to bear eternally upon our bruised arms the Saviour's cross, the insignia of which they wear in gold and silk, are we not sufficiently outraged, sufficiently unhappy? Must we still, while suffering from the inequality which casts us into the lowest rank, seek to consecrate among ourselves that absurd and culpable inequality? We laugh at the pretentions of the great; we smile at their coats of arms and their liveries; we hold their genealogies in execration and contempt; still, what do we, other than imitate them? We dispute for pre-

cedence in rival societies; we foolishly boast the antiquity of our origin; and we have not enough satirical songs, not enough insults, threats, and outrages, for the newly-formed societies, which seem to us stained by low origin and illegitimacy. Upon all the soil of France, we provoke each other, we cut each other's throats for the right of wearing exclusively the square and the compass; as if every man, who labours in the sweat of his brow, had not the right to clothe himself in the insignia of his profession! The colour of a ribbon placed a little higher or lower, the ornament of an ear-ring, such are the important questions which foment the hatred and spill the blood of poor workmen. When I think of it, I laugh with pity; or rather, I weep with shame.'

Emotion prevented the young reformer from continuing his ardent declamation. His heart was full; but he had not words enough to throw forth the generous indignation which suffocated him. He stopped, his chest oppressed, his brow burning. 'Amaury, Amaury!' cried he in a stifled voice, seizing his companion's arm, 'you wished to know the cause of my suffering; I have told you, and it seems to me that you must understand me. I am neither a fool, nor a dreamer, nor ambitious, nor a traitor; but I love the men of my race, and I am unhappy because they hate each other.'

Impartial critic (benevolent reader, as we formerly said), be indulgent to the incompetent translator who transmits to you the words of the artisan. The man does not speak the same language as you do, and the narrator who serves him as interpeter, is compelled to alter the abrupt beauty, the original turn and poetical abundance of his text, in order to communicate to you his thoughts. Perhaps you will accuse this weak intermediator of lending to his heroes feelings and ideas which they cannot have. To that reproach he has but one word in answer: inform yourself. Leave those heights on which the literary muse has so long kept herself isolated from the great mass of the human race. Descend into those regions whence comic poetry draws so largely for the stage, and for caricatures; deign to look upon the serious face of that pensive and deeply inspired people, whom you believe to be still uncultivated and rude. You will there see more than one Pierre Huguenin at this moment. Look, look, I adjure you, and do not pronounce upon him the unjust sentence which condemns him to vegetate in ignorance and ferocity. Know his defects and his vices, for he has such, and I will not gloss them over to you; but know also his greatness and his virtues; and you will feel yourself, at your contact with him, more artless and more generous than you have been for a long while.

What is admirable in the people, is simplicity of heart;

that holy simplicity, lost to us, alas! since the enormous abuse we have made of the form of our thoughts. Among the people, every form is new; and truth, under that of common place, still draws from them tears of enthusiasm and conviction. O noble childhood of the soul! source of fatal errors, of sublime illusions and heroical devotedness, shame to every one who exploits thee! Love and blessing upon every one shall cause thee to enter into manhood, while preserving thy purity without ignorance!

In consequence of this candour which dwells in the depths of uncultivated souls, the word of Pierre Huguenin would meet with few obstacles in the good minds of his class; and that of his friend the Corinthian did not revolt in a sharp discussion. He listened to him a long while in silence; then he said, clasping his hand: 'Pierre, Pierre, you know much more than I. do upon such matters, and I can find nothing to answer you. I feel sad with you, and know of no remedy for our evil.'

CHAPTER X.

Very curious researches would be necessary to discover, in the past, the causes of the enmity which prevailed in those dissensions of which Pierre Huguenin complained, among the different associations of workmen. But a profound darkness covers them. The workmen, if they know, conceal them well; and I believe that they are no better informed than we. What signifies, for example, that interminable and bloody question of the murder of Hiram in the workshops of the temple at Jerusalem, between the two most ancient societies, that of Solomon and that of master Jacques, otherwise called also the *Devoir* and the *Devoir of liberty*?—a question which the greater part of the companions look upon as serious and in the most material light. Each society sends back to its rival this terrible accusation; each strives to wash its hands of it; they put on gloves in the solemnities of the order to testify that they are pure from this crime; they provoke, beat, and kill each other, to avenge the memory of Hiram, the superintendent of the labours of the temple, assassinated and hidden under the rubbish by a jealous and cruel portion of his workmen. There is doubtless herein some great historical fact, or some vital principle of the past and the future of the people, hidden under a fiction which is not devoid of poetry. But, as in the earlier ages, the myth is understood literally by the

workmen, a true race of children, imbued with all the credulous illusions, with all the unconquered instincts, with all the tender and candid impulses of childhood. Yes, dear and wondering reader, the people represent to you a giant in the cradle, who begins to feel life overflow in his powerful chest, and who raises himself to try his unsteady steps upon the brink of an abyss. Which will fall therein, he or we? Madame! madame! hasten to be beautiful and to display your diamonds. Perhaps they have been dipped in the blood of Hiram, and perhaps you will one day be obliged to hide them or to cast them far from you.

Some well informed and studious workmen (for there are such, and this is not the least certain fact of which I can assure you) have philosophically sought to raise the veil from this mystery. Some attribute the creation of their order to the ruin of the order of the temple, and, according to them, the famous master Jacques, head carpenter of Solomon, could have been no other than the grand master Jacques de Molay, a martyr sacrificed by an avaricious and cruel king of the name of Philip. According to others, we must ascend still higher into the past, and search for the source of this inextinguishable aversion, in the resentment of the races disinherited and persecuted in the south of France, of the Albigenses, or inhabitants of the banks of the *gaves** (thence all those great insurrections of shepherds, of Vaudois, of Protestants, and of Calvinists, all more or less partisans or continuers of the doctrine of the *eternal gospel*, who have, at different epochs, watered with their blood the plains and roads of France, have not been smothered without many bitter recollections, many fatal resentments, and have remained existing and been handed down in heritage from generation to generation until our day. The cause is forgotten, lost or denaturalized in the night of tradition, but the passion subsists. Do not go into Corsica to seek for the poetical tragedy of the *Vendetta*; it is at your door, it is in your house. The stone-cutter who built the walls of your house is the irreconcileable enemy of the carpenter who covered it; and for a word, for a sign, for a look, their blood has flowed upon this stone, escutcheon of their nobility, mystic foundation of their right.

There are two societies whose foundation is immemorial; we have named them.† From these two societies, or from one gavots), against the executioners of the North and the Dominican inquisitors. And we, we can, if we will, suppose that

* Gave means torrent, among the Pyrenees.

† See the Book of Companionship, by Agricol Perdiguier, called Avignonnais-la-Vertu.

of them, has issued a third society, enemy of the two others: that of the *Union* or the *Independents*, called *the Revoltes*. It was originated in Bordeaux, in 1830, by candidates who revolted against their companions. At Lyons, at Marseilles, at Nantes, numerous insurgents of the same order joined themselves to them and constituted the *Union*. A fourth society is that of *Father Soubise*, which also calls itself devorant.—Thus there are four principal societies or devoirs, which are each composed of several trades, and to which are attached numerous adjunct institutions, more or less recent, some cordially accepted, others violently repelled by the societies to which they wish to unite themselves by good-will or by force.

A whole book would be required to enumerate all the societies, their pretensions, their titles, their statutes, their origins, their customs, and their mutual relations. Such a society is allied to another: for example, the children of Father Soubise pride themselves on being, like those of master Jacques, companions of the devoir, and live in no better understanding with the latter on that account. Such another society is born enemy of such another. In the bosom of the same devoir there are trades which tolerate each other, others which support each other, others which hate each other mortally. In general, the newly formed societies are rejected by the pride of the ancient ones, and only acquire their right of admission into the companionship at the price of their blood. Each devoir has its code. In some there are two grades; in others three and four. The condition of the candidate is happy or miserable, according to the despotic or liberal spirit of the society. Finally, all these different and differing camps are united under one same appellation, the *companions of the tour of France*. Each society has its *cities of devoir*, in which the companions can station themselves, be instructed in work, sharing in them the assistance, help, and protection of a body of companions who are generally entitled the *society*, and the members of which are fixed or renewed according to their interests or their necessities. When they are too numerous to subsist, some among those first arrived are obliged to give place to the last comers.

Certain cities may be occupied by different devoirs; certain others are the exclusive field of a single devoir, either from ancient custom, or from a transaction similar to what happened in the hundred years' bargain of the city of Lyons. Certain bases are common to all the devoirs and to all the trades which compose them: and looking upon them as a whole, these principal bases are noble and generous. The *embauchage* (enrolling, that is, the admission of the workman to labour the *levaged' acquit* (settlement of accounts), that is, the guarantee of his honour; the connexion of the journey-

man with the master; the *conduite*, that is, the fraternal farewells, established as ceremonies; the care and assistance granted to the sick, the honours paid to the dead, the celebration of patronal fetes, and many other customs, are about the same in all the companionships. The difference consists in the external forms, the formulas, the titles, the insignia, the colours, the songs, &c.

The majority of the workmen in the provinces are enrolled in the companionship. A small portion are ignorant of its importance, and do not think to pierce its mysteries. In the inland provinces, where a trade is almost always hereditary, the son or the nephew is naturally the apprentice of the master. In those existences fixed beforehand and but little anxious to perfect the art, the companionship is useless and the tour of France unused.

Certain trades have had devoirs which have been *lost*; that is, their statutes, being no longer necessary for their organization and security, have fallen into disuse.* Fellow feeling, political bonds, are sufficient for those companies, more enlightened, perhaps, but perhaps less united also. At Paris, the companionship tends each day more and more to be lost and dispersed, in the vast field of different labours and interests. No society could monopolize the work. Besides, the sceptical spirit of a more advanced civilization has done justice to the Gothic customs of the companionship, perhaps too soon; for a fraternal association extended to all labourers was not yet ready to replace the partial associations. Still the hatreds of party are not always effaced. The carpenters, *companions of liberty*, there inhabit the left bank of the Seine; their adversaries, the carpenters, *travelling companions*, occupy the right bank. They are bound by an agreement to work on that side of the river where their domicil is fixed. They fight nevertheless, and the other societies are not always tolerant towards each other. But in general it may be said that the companionship, with its powers and its passions, is there lost and absorbed in the bosom of the great movement which carries everything forward in an independent and sustained march.

That which preserves the importance of the companionship in the provinces, is the teaching, the warlike ardour, the spirit of association, and the habit of a regular association infused into a mass of young persons, who bring to it an enterprising character, the love of progress, the necessity of

* It has been the case that the usuages of certain societies originated too far back in the middle ages to be observed at this day. The new adepts recoiled at the barbarism of practices which the old members wished in vain to preserve.

escaping from isolation, from ignorance and poverty. These are the noble forlorn hopes of the great family of working-men, the Bohemian artists of industry, the audacious Mamertines of primitive Rome. Some are impelled by the rude despotism of the family which oppresses and exploits them; others, by the want of family and of capital to commence with, a lost situation, disappointed love, a feeling of legitimate pride; and, above all, the desire to see, to breathe, and to live, drives into it each year the chosen spirits of ardent youth. The tour of France is the poetical phase, the adventurous pilgrimage, the night-errantry of the artisan. He who has neither home nor patrimony goes upon the road to seek a country, under the ægis of an adoptive family which does not abandon him either during his life or after his death. Even he who aspires to an honourable and sure position in his native place, wishes, at the least, to expend the vigour of his youth and know the excitements of active life. He must return to the fold and accept the laborious and sedentary condition of his neighbours. Perhaps, in the whole course of that future life, he will not again find a year, a season, a week of liberty. Well! he must put an end to this vague uneasiness which besieges him; he must travel. He will resume the file or the hammer of his fathers later in life; but he will have recollections and impressions, he will have seen the world, he will be able to tell his friends and children how beautiful and how great is their father-land; he will have made his tour of France.

I think that this digression was necessary for the understanding of my recital. Now, dear readers, and you, good companions, permit me to run after my heroes, who have not stopped, as I have done, upon the banks of the Loire.

CHAPTER XI.

They reached Blois just as the clock of the Cathedral was striking ten. They had rested enough at the Bower of wisdom not to feel any fatigue from this last stint, accomplished while conversing pleasantly by the light of the stars. They directed their steps towards the Mother of their devoir.

By Mother is understood the inn at which a society of companions lodges, eats, and holds its meetings. The hostess of that inn is also called the mother; even the host, if a bachelor, is called mother. It is not unusual to play upon these words, and call a good old innkeeper *the father mother.*

About a year had passed since Amaury the Corinthian had left Blois. Pierre had remarked that as they approached the city, his friend had listened to him less attentively. But when they had passed the first houses he was much astonished at his agitation.

'What is the matter with you?' said he to him; 'sometimes you walk so fast that I find it difficult to keep up with you, at others so slowly that I am obliged to wait for you. You stumble at every step, and seem agitated as if you both feared and desired to reach the end of our journey.'

'Do not question me, dear Villepreux,' replied the Corinthian. 'I am agitated, I confess; but I cannot tell you the cause. I have never had any secrets from you, excepting one, which I will perhaps confide to you some day; but it seems to me that the time has not yet come.'

Pierre did not insist, and they reached the mother's in a few moments. The inn was situated on the left bank of the Loire, in the suburb which the river separates from the city. It was neat and well kept, as usual, and the two friends recognised the maid servant and the dog of the house. But the host did not come as usual to meet them and embrace them fraternally. 'Where then is our friend Savinien?' asked Amaury with unsteady voice. The servant made him a sign as if to cut short his words, and pointed to a little girl who was saying her prayers in the chimney corner, and who, prepared to go to bed, had her little night-cap on. Amaury thought that the maid desired him not to disturb the child's prayer. He bent over the little Manette, and lightly touched with his lips the long curls of brown hair which escaped from her open-work cap. Pierre began to guess the Corinthian's secret on seeing the tenderness full of grief with which he gazed upon the child.

'M. Villepreux,' said the servant in a low voice, drawing Pierre Huguenin to a little distance, 'you must not speak of our dead master before the little one; it always makes her cry, poor dear soul! We buried M. Savinien only a fortnight ago. Our mistress has suffered a good deal.'

Hardly had she said these words when a door opened, and the widow of Savinien, she who was called the mother, appeared in mourning and with a widow's cap She was a woman of about twenty-eight, beautiful as one of Raphael's virgins, with the same regularity of feature and the same expression of a calm and noble sweetness. The traces of a recent and profound sorrow were upon her face, and rendered her only the more touching; for there was also in her look the feeling of an angelic strength.

She carried in her arms her second child half undressed and already asleep, a great fat boy, blond as amber, fresh as

the morning. At first she saw only Pierre Huguenin, upon whom the light of the lamp fell.

'My son Villepreux,' cried she with an affectionate and melancholy smile, 'you are welcome, and, as always dear. Alas! You have now only a mother! . Your father Savinien is in heaven with the good God.'

At that voice the Corinthian had quickly turned; at those words a cry escaped from the depths of his bosom.

'Savinien dead!' cried he; 'Savinienne a widow consequently—!'

And he sank into a chair.

At that voice, at those words, the resigned calmness of the Savinienne* changed into so strong an emotion, that, in order not to let her child fall, she placed him in Pierre Huguenin's arms. She made a step towards the Corinthian; then she stopped, confused, undecided; and the Corinthian, who had risen to rush towards her, fell again upon his chair and hid his face in the hair of little Manette, who, kneeling between his knees, had burst into sobs at the mere name of her father.

The mother then recovered her presence of mind; and, coming towards him, said to him with dignity: 'See the sorrow of this child. She has lost a good father; and you, Corinthian, you have lost a good friend.'

'We will weep for him together,' said Amaury, without daring to look at her or take the hand she extended to him.

'Not together,' replied the Savinienne, lowering her voice; 'but I esteem you too much to think that you will not regret him.'

At this moment the door of the back-hall opened, and Pierre saw about thirty journeymen at table. They had taken their repast so peaceably that no one could have suspected the vicinity of a meeting of young people. Since the death of Savinien, from respect to his memory as much as from the mourning of his family, they ate almost in silence, drank moderately, and no one raised his voice. Still, as soon as they saw Pierre Huguenin, they could not restrain exclamations of surprise and joy. Some came to embrace him, many rose, and all saluted him with their caps or their hats; for those who did not know him, had been quickly informed that he was one of the best journeymen of the tour of France, and had been *first companion* at Nimes and *dignitary* at Nantes.

After the enthusiasm of the first welcome, which was no

* In the inland provinces, the custom of the people, who never use, as is well known, the word, Madame, is to form the name of the wife from that of her husband; Raymonet, la Raymonette; Sylvain, la Sylvaine.

less cordial towards Amaury on the part of those who were acquainted with him, they were requested to seat themselves at table, and the mother, overcoming her emotion with the strength given her by the habit of labour, began to serve them.

Huguenin remarked that the maid said to her:

'Do not trouble yourself, mistress; put your little one quietly to bed, I will wait upon these young men.'

And he also remarked that the Savinienne replied:

'No, I will wait upon them myself; do you put the children to bed.'

Then she gave a kiss to each of them, and carried the supper to the Corinthian with an earnestness which betokened a secret anxiety. She also served Huguenin with the care, the good grace and the neatness which made of her the pearl of mothers, as all the companions said. But an invincible preference made her pass and repass incessantly behind the Corinthian's chair. She did not look at him, she did not touch him when she leant over him to serve him; but she forstalled all his wishes, and was inwardly troubled to see that he made useless efforts to eat.

'Dear and faithful companions,' said *Lyonnais la-Belle-conduite* (Good conduct), filling his glass, "I drink to the health of Villepreau l'Ami-du-trait and of Nantais le Corinthien, without separating their names, since their hearts are united for life. They are brothers in Solomon, and their friendship recalls that of our poet *Nantais Pret à-bien faire* for his dear *Percheron*;' and he sang with a manly voice these two verses of the joiner poet:—

"Those who have no friends
Are very unhappy on the earth."

'Well said, but badly sung,' said *Bordelais le-Cœur-aimable* (Amiable heart).

'How, badly sung?' cried Lyonnais la-Belle-conduite. 'Do you wish me to sing to you—

"Glory to Percheron *le chapiteau*,*
Let us pay homage to his science,"—?

'Bad! bad! still more bad!' returned Cœur-aimable. 'Singing unseasonably is always singing badly. And a look towards the mother recalled the singer to order.

'Let him sing,' said the Savinienne, with gentleness. 'Do not thwart him for so small a matter. When one sings friendship, moreover—'

* The capital of a column.

'If we begin we cannot stop,' observed Cœur-aimable, 'and when we have made a resolution not to sing without necessity—'

'We must keep it,' interrupted Belle-conduite. 'That is right; I thank you, brother; I was wrong. But we can drink a glass in honour of the friends, even two—'

'Not more than three beyond thirst,' said *Marseillais l'Enfant-du-genie* (The child of genius); 'That is the rule. We must have no noise here. What would the devorants say if they heard an uproar in the house of a mother in mourning? Besides, which of us would wish to grieve ours, the beautiful, the good, the honest, the orderly Savinienne?'

'It is to her that I empty my second cup,' cried Lyonnais la-Belle-conduite. 'Don't you touch glasses, *pays*?'* added he, seeing that Amaury extended his with a trembling hand. 'Has he a fever, the *pays*?'

'Silence on that point,' said *Morvandais Sans-crainte* in the ear of his neighbour Belle-conduite. 'That pay wanted to say soft things, a while ago, to the mother, but she was too honest a woman to listen to him.'

'I believe it indeed!' returned Belle-conduite. 'Still he is a pretty companion, white as a woman, with fine golden hair, and his chin is like a peach; strong and solid, too. They say he has talent?'

'If not more, at least as much as l'Ami-du-trait, and no more rivalry between them in talent than in love.'

'Speak lower,' said l'Enfant-du-genie, who, seated next, had heard them; 'here is the dignitary, and if you speak slightingly of the mother before him, it may go further than you wish.'

'No one speaks slightingly, my dear pays,' replied Sans-crainte.

The dignitary entered. On recognising *Romanet le-Bon-soutien* (good support), Pierre Huguenin rose, and they retired to another room in order to exchange the customary salutations; for they were both dignitaries, and could march side by side. Still the dignity of l'Ami-du-trait was now only honorary. It was a power which lasted only six months, and which two companions could not exercise in the same city. The present authority of Romanet le-Bon-soutien could therefore extend, in the place of his residence, over Pierre Huguenin as over a simple companion.

When they returned to the hall, and the dignitary of Blois

* The stonecutters of both parties call each other by the name of *coterie*; all the companions of other trades are addresseed as *pays*, or *monsieur*.

perceived Amaury the Corinthian, he became pale, and they embraced with emotion.

'You are welcome,' said the dignitary to the young man. 'I desired that you should be called to the competition, and I see, with satisfaction, that you have accepted. I thank you in the name of the society. My pays, this young man is gifted with a most pleasing talent: you will judge of it. Pays Corinthian,' added he, addressing Amaury more particularly, and endeavouring not to appear to attach too much importance to his question, 'did you know that we had lost our excellent father Savinien?'

'I did not, and am much grieved at it,' replied Amaury with a tone of frankness which reassured the dignitary.

'And you, pays,' resumed Bon soutien, addressing Pierre Huguenin, 'when one takes the name of l'Ami-du-trait he is modest as well as skilful. If we had known where to find you, we should have invited you to the competition, but since you testify by your presence that you have not abandoned the holy devoir of liberty, we beseech and request you to place yourself also in the ranks. We have few artists of your power.'

'I thank you heartily,' replied Huguenin; 'but I have not come for the competition. I have engagements which will not permit me to remain here. I require assistants, and I come in the name of my father, who is master, to enlist two journeymen.'

'Perhaps you might enlist them and send them to your father in your stead. When the honour of the devoir of liberty is at stake, there are few engagements which may not and should not be broken.'

'Mine are of such a nature,' replied Pierre, 'that I cannot withdraw from them. My father's honour and my own are involved.'

'In that case you are free,' said the dignitary. There was a moment's silence. At the table were scattered companions of three orders: received companions, finished companions, initiated companions. There was also a number of simple affiliates; for a great principle of equality prevails among the gavots; all the orders eat, discuss, and vote indiscriminately. Now, among all these young men, there was not a single one who did not earnestly wish to take part in the competition. As the choice was to be made from the most skilful, many had no hope of being called; and no one could understand how any reason could be imperious enough to refuse such an honour. They looked at each other surprised, and even somewhat shocked, at Pierre Huguenin's reply. But the dignitary, who wished to avoid all idle discussion, induced the assembly, by his manner, not to express their dissatisfaction.

'You know,' said he, 'that the general meeting takes place

to-morrow, Sunday. The *rouleur** has given you notice. I request you all to be there, my dear pays. And you also, pays Villepreux l'Ami-du-trait. You can aid us by your advice: that will be a method of still helping the society. As to the workmen you desire, we will see about procuring them for you.'

'I would remark to you,' replied Huguenin, lowering his voice, 'that I must have workmen of the highest merit; for the business I have to entrust to them is very delicate, and requires great skill.'

'Oh! oh!' said the rouleur, laughing rather disdainfully, 'you'll not find any until after the competition; for every man who feels that he has talents and heart wishes to compete. You will not even have the first choice; we shall secure that for our glorious contest.'

The meal being ended, the companions, before separating, formed in groups, to converse respecting matters which interested them personally.

Bordelais le-Cœur-aimable approached Pierre Huguenin and Amaury: 'It is strange,' said he to the first, 'that you are not willing to compete. If you are the most skilful among us, as many pretend, you are to blame for deserting your standard on the eve of a battle.'

'If I thought that battle useful to the interests and the honour of the society,' replied Huguenin, 'I would perhaps sacrifice my own interests and even my own honour.'

'You are doubtful,' cried Cœur-aimable. 'You think that the devorants are more skilful than we? So much the more reason to throw your name and your talent into the scale.'

'The devorants have skilful workmen, but we have some quite as good; thus, I form no judgment respecting the result of the competition. But, even if we were sure of the victory, I should pronounce against the trial.'

'Your opinion is a strange one,' returned Cœur-aimable, 'and I would advise you not to utter it so freely to pays less tolerant than myself: you would be blamed for it, and they would perhaps impute unworthy motives to you.'

'I do not understand you,' replied Pierre Huguenin.

'But,' answered Cœur-aimable, 'every man who does not desire the glory of his country is a bad citizen, and every companion—'

'I understand you now,' interrupted l'Ami-du-trait; 'but if I proved that, in any event, this competition will be pre-

* The duty of the *rouleur* (or *roleur*) is to present the workmen to the masters, who wish to enlist them, and to confirm their engagement by certain formalities. It is he who accompanies the *departing* to the bounds of the city, settles the accounts, &c.

judicial to the society, I should be doing the duty of a good companion.'

Pierre Huguenin having hitherto replied to these observations without any mystery, his words had been heard by some companions who had assembled around him. The dignitary seeing the numbers increase, and their minds become excited, broke up the group by saying to Pierre: 'My dear pays, this is neither the time nor the place to express an opinion different from that of the society. If you have good views respecting our business you have the right and freedom to make them known to-morrow before the assembly; and I summon you to be present, certain, beforehand, that if your advice is good, it will be followed, and that if it is bad your error will be forgiven.'

They separated at this wise decision. Some of the companions present lodged at the mother's. A small chamber had been got ready for Huguenin and Amaury, who were directed thither by the servant. The mother had retired before the end of the supper.

When the two friends had lain down in the same bed, according to the ancient custom of the people, Huguenin, yielding to fatigue, was about to go to sleep; but the agitation of his friend did not permit him. 'Brother,' said the young man, 'I told you that a day would perhaps come when I could confide my secret to you. Well, that day has come sooner than I thought. I love the Savinienne.'

'So I perceived this evening,' replied Pierre.

'I could not master my emotion on learning that she was free,' returned the Corinthian, 'and a moment of foolish joy betrayed me. But the voice of my conscience soon reproached me for that culpable feeling, for I was the friend of Savinien. That worthy man had a particular affection for me. You know that he called me his Benjamin, his Saint John-the-Baptist, his Raphael: he was not uneducated, and he had poetical expressions and ideas. Excellent Savinien! I would have given my life for him, and I would still give it to recal him to the earth; for the Savinienne loved him, and he made her happy. He was a much more valuable and more useful man than I.'

'I understood all that passed in your heart,' said L'Ami-du-trait.

'Is it possible?'

'We can easily read the hearts of those we love. And now, what do you hope? The Savinienne knows your love, and I believe that she returns it. But are you the husband she would choose? Would she not consider you too young

and too poor to sustain her house and be the father of her children?'

"That is what I say to myself, and what makes me dejected. Still, I am industrious; I have not lost my time upon the tour of France, I know my trade. You know that I have no bad habits, and I love her so much, that it does not seem to me she can be unhappy with me. Do you think me unworthy of her?'

'Far the contrary, and, if she consulted me, I would dissipate the fears she might have.'

'Oh! do it, my friend!' cried the Corinthian, 'speak to her of me. Try to learn what she thinks of me.'

'It would be better to know beforehand how far your intimacy has gone,' replied Pierre, smiling. 'The part you intrust to me would be less embarrassing both to her and to me.'

'I will tell you all,' replied Amaury, with frankness. 'I passed about a year here. I was hardly seventeen (I am nineteen now). I was then only affiliated, and I passed to the grade of received companion after a short residence, which caused Savinien and his wife to have a good opinion of me. I worked on the Prefecture which was then under repairs. You know all this, since it was you who caused me to be affiliated on my arrival, and you did not leave us until six months afterwards. I have all these dates in my memory; since it was on the day of your departure for Chartres, that I became sensible of the love I felt for the Savinienne. I remember the fine farewell we gave you on the highway. We had our canes and our ribbons, and we followed you in two lines, stopping at every step to drink your health. The rouleur had your cane and bundle on his shoulder. It was I who led the songs of farewell, to which all our pays replied in chorus. The solemnity of that ceremony, which is so honourable to those to whom it is decreed, and of which I was proud to see you the hero, gave me enthusiasm and courage. I embraced you without weakness, and I returned to the city with the escort, singing all the way, and not thinking of the isolation to which I should be reduced, far from the friend who had instructed and protected me. I think I must have been somewhat excited by our frequent libations, to which I had not been accustomed, and fear I never shall be. When the fumes of the wine were dissipated, and I found myself without you at the mother's, under the mantel-piece, while our brothers continued their fête around the table, I fell into a profound sadness. I resisted my grief for a long while; but I could not master it, and I burst into tears. The mother was near me, busy preparing supper for the companions. She was moved at seeing me weep; and pressing my

head between her hands, in the same way that she caresses her children: "Poor little Nantais," said she to me, "you have the best heart. When the others lose a friend, they do nothing but sing and drink until they have no more voice, and can't steady themselves on their legs. You have a woman's heart, and the wife you will one day have will be well loved. In the meanwhile, take courage, my poor child, you are not abandoned. All your pays love you, because you are a good fellow and a good workman. Your father Savinien says, he would wish to have a son just like you. And, as to me, I am your mother, do you understand? not only as I am, of all the companions, but like her who brought you into the world. You will confide to me all your troubles, you will tell me all your sorrows, and I will try to assist and to console you."

'Speaking thus, that good woman kissed me on the head, and I felt a tear from her beautiful black eyes fall upon my brow. I shall never forget that if I live as long as the Wandering Jew. I felt my heart melt with tenderness for her, and, I confess to you, that the rest of the day I hardly thought again of you. I had my eyes contantly upon the Savinienne. I followed every one of her steps. She allowed me to help her in her household cares, and honest Savinien said, on seeing me at work, "How obliging the boy is! what a good child! what a heart he has!" Savinien did not imagine that from that day I was his rival, in love with his wife.

'He never imagined it; and the more in love I was, the more confidence he had. He who was fifty, doubtless could could not think that a child like me would have other eyes for the Savinienne than those of a son. But he forgot that the Savinienne might have been his daughter, and that she could not have been my mother. That dear mother saw clearly the state of my heart. I never dared to tell her; I felt indeed that it would have been culpable, since Savinien was so good to me. And then I knew how honest she was. There was not a single companion, even among the boldest, who would have hazarded any want of respect towards her, even in his cups. But I had no need of words; my eyes told her my attachment in spite of me. Hardly had I finished my day's work, when I ran to the mother's, and always reached there first. I had a love and care for her children, like those of a woman who had nursed them. At that time she was weaning her boy. She was ill, and his cries prevented her from sleeping. She did not wish to trust him to the maid-servant, because Fanchon slept soundly, and would have taken but poor care of him, in spite of her good will. She permitted me to take the child into my bed at night. I could not close my eyes; but I was happy to tend him, and to walk

about the chamber with him in my arms, while I sang to him the song of the hen that lays silver eggs for pretty children. This lasted two months. The mother was cured, and the little one had become accustomed to sleep quietly with me. When she wished to take him back again, he was not willing to leave me, and he slept in my arms all the time I remained here. I believe there cannot be a more tender bond than that of a woman with the person who loves her child and is loved by it. The Savinienne and I were like brother and sister. When she spoke to me, when she looked at me, the sweetness of Paradise was in her voice and in her eyes, and I cared for nothing, though there was by our side some one who might have occasioned a great deal of anxiety to Savinien and to me. That was Romanet le Bon-soutien, now dignitary. What a good heart! What a brave companion is he also! He loved the Savinienne as I love her, and I really believe he will love her all his life. At that time, Savinien's affairs were quite embarrassed. He had credit, but no money; and he was obliged every year to pay a part of what he had borrowed on his word when he purchased the establishment. And as he did not make much profit (he was too honest for that), he anticipated with fear the moment when he should be obliged to give up his inn to another. If I had had anything, how happy I should have been to help him! But then I owned nothing more than the clothes I had on my back; and my earnings were hardly enough to discharge my debt to Savinien, who had fed and lodged me gratis in the beginning. Romanet le Bon-soutien was in a better position. He was rich. He had an inheritance worth several thousand crowns. He sold it, and placed the proceeds in Savinien's hands, without being willing to accept obligations or receive interest, telling him that he might repay him in ten years if he could not do better. I am willing to suppose that he acted thus from friendship to Savinien; but, without disparaging his good heart, it is easy to guess, that his feeling towards the Savinienne had a great deal to do with the pleasure he took in performing this good action. The honest young man was only the more timid with her, and, like me, he would have considered it a crime to fail in the duty of friendship to her husband. Therefore we both loved her, and she treated us both like her best friends. But Romanet, restrained by modesty in consequence of the service he had rendered, and living in the city, did not see her so frequently as I did. In fine, from whatever causes, the mother had a marked preference for me. She venerated Bon-soutien as an angel, but she cherished me as her child; and there were not on the earth four persons more united

and more happy than Savinien, his wife, Bon-soutien, and myself.

'But the time at last came when I was obliged to depart. The repairs on the Prefecture were finished, and work would soon be wanting for the number of journeymen assembled at Blois. Some young companions arrived; it was the duty of those of their grade who had been longest in the place to make room for them. I was of the number. It was determined to give us a farewell, and direct us towards Poitiers.

'Then I discovered the strength of my feelings. I was as if crazy, and the grief I experienced, showed more to the Savinienne than I should have been willing to tell her. She gave me strength to obey the devoir by speaking to me of her honour and my own; and in that exhortation, words were interchanged which we could not take back after having uttered them. At last, I departed with a broken heart, and I have never been able to love or to look at any other woman than the Savinienne. I am still as pure at this day as I was when I left Blois, and when the Savinienne kissed my forehead under the mantel-piece.'

Pierre, moved by the recital of this simple and virtuous passion, promised his friend that he would help him in his love, and that he would not leave Blois without having discovered the Savinienne's intentions, and raised the veil which concealed the Corinthian's destiny.

CHAPTER XII.

It was on the next day, a Sunday of course, that all the companions and affiliates of the devoir of liberty of Blois employed their time in deliberating on the matter of the competition. The hall consecrated to their meetings having been given up to the masons for necessary repairs, they assembled on that day in the Savinienne's barn. All the members took their seats without ceremony upon bundles of straw. The dignitary had a chair, and before him a writing table, around which were seated the secretary and the *elders*. Pierre would have wished to complete his business and depart during the morning. But, besides that the rouleur's warning was only too true, and that he could not find a single good workman who was not interested in the competition, he looked upon it as a duty to reply to the call which summoned him. When the piece for competition had been proposed, and they were about to proceed to the election of those who were to work

upon it, he requested leave to speak, in order that he might retire afterwards. It was granted him; and in spite of the agitation occasioned by the principal business, they were disposed to listen to him attentively. Each one was curious to know what a companion so generally esteemed could allege against so glorious and so holy an enterprise as the combat with the devorants. Pierre began to speak. He first demonstrated that victory was always doubtful; that the most upright and the best composed jury might be deceived; that in matters of art there were no incontestable decisions; that the public itself was often deceived by a tendency to bad taste, and that the triumph of an artist was never acknowledged by his rivals; that thus the honour which the society wished to attribute to the competition and the glory it flattered itself would be derived from it, were only illusion and deception.

He spoke also of the expenses which would be incurred for this competition. A certain number of competitors were to be deprived of work. It was necessary to support them during the time, and afterwards to indemnify them from the common fund. It was also necessary to support and pay, during the five or six months employed in the completion of the master-piece, the keepers intended as guards for the competitors. These were expenses which would certainly keep the society in debt for several years. Pierre proved his assertions by figures. But he was interrupted by murmurs. There were there some irritable self-loves which could not bear to have a doubt cast upon their scientific and artistic capacity. As happens in every assembly, whatever be its elements and its object, those hot and vain heads led all, and succeeded in persuading all that the only business was to admire them and procure triumphs for them. When Pierre Huguenin asked :—

'What good will it do the society to have half-a-dozen of its members spend six months upon a ruinous gew-gaw, upon a monument destined to perpetuate the remembrance of our folly and our vanity?'

They replied :—

'If the society chooses to incur the expense, what is it to you? If you do not wish to bear your part, thank the society;* you are free, you have finished your tour of France.'

And Pierre had much difficulty in making them understand that, if he were rich, he would have preferred taking the whole expense upon himself rather than allow the society

* To thank the society, is to retire from it so far as to have no more part in its expenses, its enterprises, or its profits. The person is still bound in heart, but is under no obligation towards it except in conscience.

to ruin itself, to incur a debt which would cripple it for twenty years perhaps.

'The society will impose all privations upon itself if need be,' they replied. 'Honour is more precious to it than riches. Let us bring down the pride of the devorants; prove to them that we alone understand the trade; compel them to yield the place to us, and then you will see that no one will complain.'

'It is not you who will complain,' said Pierre Huguenin to this observation from one of the most excited aspirers to the competition; 'you who will acquire all the honour of the combat if you succeed, and who, even in case of defeat, will be indemnified and recompensed for your labour by the society. But all those young affiliates who, hereafter, shall come to admire in your halls of study the master-piece of your competition, will they be indemnified by the sight of that trophy, for the lessons which will be wanting and the advances which cannot be made to them? As to myself, I approve the principle of emulation; but on condition that the glory of some does not impoverish others, and that scholars do not pay to remain scholars, while proclaiming the glory of the masters of the art.'

These good reasons began to take effect upon the most disinterested. Pierre Huguenin endeavoured to dissuade them from their ambitious design by reasons not more positive, but more broad. He yielded to the feelings and the ideas which had long fermented in his heart, while demonstrating the moral wrong which such struggles caused to the societies on both sides.

'Do we not commit a great injustice,' said he to them, 'when we say to men who are as industrious and needy as ourselves:—This city cannot contain us all, and enable us to live according to our pride or our ambition; let us try it by lot, or at least measure our strength; let the most skilful prevail, and the conquered depart with naked feet upon the painful path of life, in order to seek a barren corner whither our pride disdains to pursue them? Will you say that the world is large enough, and that there is work everywhere? Yes, there is everywhere room and resources for men who help each other. There are not these—no, the universe is not spacious enough for men who wish to isolate themselves, or to disperse into inimical and jealous groups. Do you not see the world of the rich? Have you never asked yourselves by what right they are born happy, and for what crime you live and die in poverty? why they enjoy in repose, while you labour in pain? What does this mean? The priests will tell you that God wills it so; but are you very sure that God does really will it so? You answer no, do you not? You are sure

of the contrary; otherwise you would be impious idolators, and you would believe in a God more wicked than the devil, an enemy of justice and of the human race. Well! do you wish me to tell you how riches are established and how poverty is perpetuated? By the skilfulness of some, and the simplicity of others. On this account the simple have acknowledged their defeat and their exclusion from all riches and all honours; for the skilful have proved to them that it ought to be so. And now there have been such hosts of simple ones, and you and your fathers have been forced to work for the rich without complaint and without being wearied. You consider this very unjust. From morning to night I hear this said, and I say so myself. That which you consider unjust towards yourselves, would you then think it just to make others suffer?

'Sometimes, in spite of fate, you are permitted to escape from your poverty; but on what conditions? You must be very industrious, very persevering, and perhaps very selfish. You must raise yourself by the gain, the avarice, the severity of labour beyond your fellows; for who are those among us that succeed in amassing any property and establishing themselves? Those only who have an inheritance, or a superior genius. I know the respect which is due to intelligence; but do you consider it very just, very generous, that a man should be crushed by poverty and die on a dunghill, because God has not granted to him so much mind or health as to you? What is the spirit of our society? what is its cause, its object? The necessity of employing the intelligence and the courage of some to stimulate and correct the ignorance or the weakness of others; and for this it is necessary to sustain and assist them with our gains, that is, with our labour, until they have profited by our lessons and acknowledge the necessity of working without sparing themselves. The thought which instituted the devoir of liberty, and, permit me to tell you, the thought which instituted the different devoirs of the companionship, is therefore great, moral, and according to the designs of *Solomon*.* Well! that which you do when you labour to excel society is entirely opposed to that august thought, to those supreme designs. If the labourers of the Temple thought it necessary to divide themselves into different tribes under the direction of several chiefs, the reason is because it was their mission to traverse the world by dif-

* *Solomon* was then to the companions, and will still long be, to a great number, an ideal being, a kind of fetish to whom all perfections, all powers, are attributed. His name is almost equivalent to that of the Eternal, and Pierre Huguenin was obliged to make use of it in order to give more authority to his religious invocation.

ferent roads, in order to carry to several points at once the light and the advantages of industry. Be sure that the children of Jacques and those of Soubise are, as well as ourselves, the children of the great Solomon.'

A murmur of disapprobation almost interrupted l'Ami-du-trait. He hastened to resume, with address, for some allegory was necessary for minds less enlightened than his own—

'They are misguided children, rebellious children, if you will. In their long and painful pilgrimage, they have forgotten the wise laws and even the august name of their father. Jacques was perhaps an impostor who corrupted their judgment and made himself a prophet in order to steal the worship of the true master; and this is why they feel so much animosity towards us; this is why they provoke and maltreat us with so much fanaticism, endeavouring to isolate themselves from us and to dispute with us the right to labour, the sacred inheritance of all companions. Will you then imitate their example; and, because they are blind and inhuman, will you act like them? Will you lift the gauntlet of combat? Oh, my pays! Oh, my brothers! Recal a great lesson which Solomon has given us. Two mothers contended for a child; he commanded that it should be cut in twain, and that each should carry away half. The false mother accepted the division, the true mother cried out that it should be given whole to her rival. This apologue is the emblem of our destiny. Those of us who require the division of the earth and of work are void of heart, and do not think that the portion divided by the sword of hatred will be but a corpse in their hands.'

Pierre spoke to them still a long while. I know not if he bore in his bosom the revelation of a time and a society in which the principle of individual liberty could be reconciled with the rights of all. I know that his intelligent brain could be elevated to this conception, such as it has now entered into the hearts and minds of the elect; but it must be remarked that, at this epoch, the principal of Saint-Simonism (the first of the modern doctrines which became in any degree popular under the reign of the Bourbons) had not yet been developed. The germs of a social and religious philosophy were hidden in secret councils, or showed themselves only in the meditations of political economists. Probably Pierre Huguenin had never heard of them; but an upright and somewhat cultivated mind, an ardent soul, a poetic imagination, made of him a mysterious and singular being, quite similar to those inspired shepherds who are born according to the old traditions, with the spirit of prophecy. One might have said, with the Savinienne, that he was filled with the spirit of the Lord; for, in the candour of his enthusiasm, he

touched upon the most elevated human questions, without himself knowing what were the veiled heights to which his dreams had carried him. This is why his discourses, of which we can here give only the rough and dry substance, had an evangelical character of which the effect was great upon simple minds, and still virgin imaginations. He advised them to attempt, instead of a doubtful combat, an honourable peace. The devorants, tired of quarreling, began to soften. It would perhaps be easier than was thought, to induce them to recognise the right of the children of Solomon. Why, if the latter could listen to reason, and understand justice, should not the devorants do the same? Were they not men? and, at the risk of not being listened to ought not the attempt to be made to bring them back to humane sentiments, rather than embitter their hatred by a challenge of self love? In fine would there not be still time to resume the competition, when it was absolutely demonstrated to be the only means of avoiding new conflicts? But what should not be undertaken before abandoning the chances of peace and alliance? Had they acted in this spirit? Far contrary, they had thought only of returning insult for insult, bravado for bravado. They had, in mere gaiety of heart, thrown themselves into a thousand dangers which could easily have been avoided in the beginning by more calmness and dignity. Had they not that very morning also provoked the Drilles carpenters, by singing songs of war and curses before their workshops? Pierre had been a witness of this fact. He censured it with earnestness, with sorrow. 'You pride yourselves on being the lords, the patricians of the tour of France,' said he to them; 'have therefore, at least, the noble manners which are proper when one esteems himself superior to the rest of men.'

When he ceased speaking, there was a long silence. The things which he had said were so new and so strange, that his hearers had thought they were dreaming in another life, and they required some time to recognise themselves in the shadows of this world.

But, by degrees, the restrained passions recovered their sway. Their reign was not yet ended; and the workmen had retained, of the great principle of fraternal equality proclaimed by the French revolution, only a motto instead of a faith, a few glorious and profound words, already as mysterious to them as the rites of the companionship. Murmurs soon succeeded to the mute acquiescence of a few, to the deep stupor of the greater number; and those whose hearts had involuntarily thrilled, blushed quite as soon at having felt that emotion, or having allowed it to appear. At last one of the most excited spoke. 'That is a fine discourse,' said he, 'and a better sermon than a curate could have preached from his

pulpit. If all the merit of a companion is to know books and to speak like them, honour to you, pays Villepreux l'Ami-du-trait. You know more than all of us, and if you had to do with women, perhaps you would make them weep. But we are men, children of Solomon; and if the glory of a companion of the devoir of liberty is to support his society, to devote himself body and soul for it, to repel insults, to make a rampart for it of his breast, shame to you, pays Villepreux! for you have spoken badly, and you would deserve to be reprimanded. How then! We have listened to the councils of cowardly prudence and feel no indignation! We have been told that we ought to abjure our honour, forget the murder of our brothers, present our cheek to blows, erase our name from the tour of France, apparently, and we have listened to it all with patience! You see well, pays Villepreux, that we are gentle and moderate as men can be. You see that we have the respect of the devoir, and the fraternity of the companionship strong in our hearts, since we have not silenced you as a madman, or thrown you out hence as a false brother. You have so fine a reputation, and have been invested with such eminent dignities by the society, that we persist in believing your intentions good and your heart upright. But your mind has been misled by books, and this should be a warning to all who have heard you. Who knows too much of them, does not know enough; and whoever learns many useless things, runs the risk of forgetting the most necessary, the most sacred.'

Other orators, more vehement still, testified even greater indignation, and soon a violent discussion arose against Pierre Huguenin. He replied calmly; he bore their accusations, their reproaches, and threats, with the resignation of a martyr and the firmness of a stoic. He said many excellent things, varying his arguments, and adapting his figures of speech to the powers of those who addressed him. But he saw with sorrow that the small number of his adherents diminished more and more, and he expected public insults: for the meeting was in a state of entire confusion, and truth had no longer any power over these hardened or excited minds. At last the dignitary, after many useless efforts, obtained silence, and undertook to defend Pierre Huguenin's intentions.

'I know him too well to doubt him,' said he; 'and if a suspicion against his honour could enter my mind, I believe in an instant afterwards I should ask his pardon for it on my knees. There will therefore be no reprimands here except for those who should permit themselves to insult him. Upon all points he has spoken according to his conscience, and upon many my sentiments agree with his. Still I believe that his ideas are not applicable at this moment; this is why I propose

to go forward; but I ask, once for all, that due respect be paid to liberty of opinions, and that they be opposed without bitterness and without brutality. Be consoled, pays Villepreux, for the rather violent contradiction you have encountered here. If you have been mistaken in some things, you have nevertheless said certain truths which will remain engraved on more than one friendly heart, and on mine especially.—Be sure that some will remain, even in the minds of the most excited. Perhaps the ideas of peace and general union which you have boldly proclaimed will be freely listened to in happier days. I myself think that you have spoken well, and that you have not been corrupted by the knowledge of books. You are free to retire, if the discussion of our interests, as we understand them at the moment, wounds your faith; but we request you not to leave the city before the crisis in which we are now has changed its aspect. If it were necessary to enter into fresh combats, and if the society should order you to march, we know that you would behave like a brave soldier of the army of Solomon.'

Pierre bowed in sign of respect and submission. He retired, and the Corinthian followed him. 'Brother,' said this noble young man to him, 'do not be humiliated, do not be sad, I beseech you; what the dignitary has just said is very true: Your words have found their echo in hearts which sympathize with yours.'

'I am not humiliated,' replied l'Ami-du-trait, 'and your sympathy alone would be enough to recompense me for the anger of the others. But I am anxious, I confess, and for an entirely personal matter. The dignitary has in some sort ordered me to remain here. I understand the delicacy of his intentions; he sees that many will accuse me of a want of courage at the hour of conflict, and he gives me an opportunity to reinstate myself in their eyes: but I am not anxious for that barbarous honour, and shall accept it with sorrow. A not less important reason makes me regret having renewed my connexion with the society. I gave my word of honour to my father to return in three days, and he has given his to resume work to-morrow. He cannot do it without me. He is ill, and perhaps more seriously so since my departure. He is of an excitable temperament, of a scrupulous loyalty. At this hour he expects me on the road, and I think I see him tormented by uncertainty, by impatience, by fear. Poor father! he had so much faith in the promise I made to him! And I must fail to fulfil it!'

'Pierre,' replied the Corinthian, 'I feel that you are between two duties: the holy *duty of liberty* and filial duty, which is not less sacred. You must divide your burden. I wish to take half of it. You will remain here to obey the

laws of the society, and I will go to your father. I will invent some pretext to excuse you, and I will go to work in your place. An hour's attention will be enough for me to receive your instructions. I know how you demonstrate, and you know how I listen. Come into the garden; before night I will be on the road. I will sleep at Jambe-de-bois', and before daylight will take the diligence which passes there. To-morrow evening I will be at your father's, the next day morning in the chapel of your old chateau. Thus everything will be arranged, and your mind will be easy.'

'Dear Amaury,' replied Pierre Huguenin, 'I expected nothing less from your friendship and from a heart like yours; but I cannot accept your devotedness. It is probable that the competition will take place, and I neither ought nor wish to make you lose the opportunity of becoming known and acquiring glory. It is not because you are my pupil, but I am certain that you are the most able of those who will be presented for the competition. If you do not carry off the prize of the golden compass, at least you will give such proofs of talent that you will be spoken of on the tour of France. Such opportunities offer but seldom, and they often decide the whole future of a workman. Please God I will not make you lose that which may present itself to-morrow!'

'And I, I wish to lose it,' replied the Corinthian, 'and I will lose it at any event. You must think me very contracted if you believe that my ideas and my feelings have not advanced since this morning. I have opened my eyes, brother; and I am no longer the blind and rude man who yesterday listened to you with stupor upon the road to Blois. The words which you uttered before the assembly have fallen into my heart like good seed into a fertile furrow. It seemed to me that a cloud rose from the earth between us, and that I had hitherto loved you through a veil. Yes, my friend, you had seemed to me nothing more than a well taught, honest, and good companion. At present I see well that you are more than that, more than a workman, more than a man perhaps. What am I going to say? I represented to myself the Christ, that son of a carpenter, poor, obscure, wandering upon the earth, and talking to wretched workmen like ourselves, without money, almost without bread, without education (it is thus he has been represented to us.) I remembered what is related of his beauty, of his youth, of his gentleness, of the precepts of wisdom and charity which he explained, as you have done to-day, in parables. I do not wish to wound your modesty, Pierre, by comparing you to him whom some call God; but I said to myself: If the Christ should again come among us, and should pass before this house, what would he do? He would see the Savinienne on the threshold, with

her charming manner and her two beautiful children, and he would bless them. And then the Savinienne would beseech him to enter; she would wash his dusty and burning feet, and she would shelter her little ones in the folds of the Saviour's robe while she went to seek the purest water to assuage his thirst. And during this time, the carpenter's son would question the children, and he would learn from them that there are there, in the barn, some men who are talking and concerting. Then the divine man would wish to know the hearts of his brothers, of his sons, the poor workmen. He would enter the barn, and would not disdain to seat himself, like us, upon a bundle of straw, he who was born upon the straw of a stable; then he would listen. And while I was dreaming thus, I depicted to myself the beautiful face of Jesus, attentive and smiling, and his beautiful eyes fixed upon you with an expression of gentleness and emotion.—And when you had finished speaking (for this, Pierre, was not a simple supposition of my mind; it was like a vision before my eyes), when you had finished speaking, I saw him approach, bend over you, and say to you, laying his hands on you, what he said to the poor men of the people whom he made his disciples: "Come with me, leave your nets and follow me? I wish to make you a fisher of men." And it seemed to me that a great light shone from the brow of the Christ, and enveloped you in its rays. Then I said to myself: Pierre is an apostle; why did I not know it? He prophesies; why have I not understood him? And I also, I rose with a zeal which consumed me. I was about to cry out: O Christ! take me with my brother; I am not worthy to unloose the latchets of thy shoes, but I will listen to thee, and will gather the crumbs which fall from thy table. Then the companions became excited. They contradicted you, they blamed you. My vision was effaced, but there remained as it were a trembling in my whole body; I had great difficulty in restraining myself; I was ready to weep, as at the time when the Savinienne, that pious woman who loves God so much, without loving the priests, used to read to me, with her sweet voice, the Holy Scriptures, in an old Bible that has been in her family two or three hundred years. Therefore I shall never be impious; and, even if others laugh at me, I shall never laugh at Jesus, the carpenter's son. Whether he be God or not, whether he was entirely dead or rose again, I cannot examine that, and do not trouble myself about it. There are even some who say that he never existed. I, I say that it is impossible he should not have existed; and I am more sure of it since I have understood what you think and what you wish to make others understand. Why should you be the first workman who has had such ideas? I cannot con-

ceive now how I myself have not had them sooner; and I say to myself that you would not have had them, if men or gods like Jesus had not spread them abroad in the world. This is why I no longer wish to listen to any other than you; I do not wish to act, to think, to work, not even to love, unless you say to me: That is good, that is just. And I will never leave you again—except that I will leave you this evening, but that is to go and wait for you at your father's. You see that I no longer think of competition, of glory, of master-pieces—we have a very different thing to do, that is to work without injuring others, without humiliating them, without quarrelling with them for what belongs to them as well as to us.'

The Savinienne, anxious at seeing Pierre and Amaury leave the meeting and enter the garden in earnest conversation, had followed them. By degrees, she had approached; and resting upon the back of their bench, she listened to them. Pierre saw her clearly, but he was happy to have her hear the Corinthian's elevated talk, and he was careful not to betray her presence. When the Corinthian ceased, the Savinienne said to him, with a sigh, 'I wish Savinien was still here to listen to you; but I hope that in heaven he sees and blesses you. Corinthian, you have a heart and a mind, such as I have never known—if not in my poor Savinien; but he had a great many things to learn, and, as is said, truth comes from the mouth of children.'

Pierre smiled with joy, on seeing that the Savinienne appreciated the Corinthian. He saw the blushes and the transport of his friend, when the mother extended her hand to him, saying, 'It is for life and death between us, as regards esteem, my son Amaury.'

'And friendship?' cried the young man, emboldened and agitated at the same time.

'Friendship means one thing between men, and another between men and women,' replied she naively. 'You have mine, as if we were two men or two women.'

Amaury did not answer. The black dress of the widow imposed silence on him. She withdrew, and Pierre resumed, looking at his friend, who followed her with his eyes. 'And now, brother, do you still wish to go? Are you not retained here by something more dear and more important than glory?'

'Where I on the eve of becoming her husband,' replied the Corinthian, 'I would still go to save your honour. But we are not in that position. I cannot remain here. I do not know where I can find strength not to say what I think; and that which, I think, a woman in mourning ought not to hear. I should fail in my duty to myself, in my duty to the memory

of Savinien; I should lose the Savinienne's esteem, and all this in spite of myself. Make me go, Pierre; you will do a service to me, even more than yourself.

Pierre felt that his friend was right. 'Well, as for myself, I accept,' said he, 'but I doubt if the society will consent. In the excess of your modesty, you forget that if the competition takes place, they will have more need of you than of any other, and will not permit you to depart thus. Whatever may be the result of our differences with the *devoir*, your presence here is considered as necessary, since you were summoned.'

'Pierre, Pierre!' cried the Corinthian with sadness, 'have you already forgotten, then, what you said to me yesterday upon the road? Are you not disgusted with that agreement, which subjects us to the caprices and prejudices of ignorant and violent men? We owe to them assistance, when they are in misfortune or danger; for they are our brothers. But when they are intoxicated with pride or vengeance, do we owe to them a blind submission? No! for me, that dream is effaced, and just now, when I saw them turn against you, I considered them so culpable that the bonds of sworn affection were broken in my heart in spite of me. Come, let us go back to the meeting. I will ask them to let me go, tell them they must not depend on me for the competition; and, if they refuse me, I will thank the society, resume my liberty'—

'You have no right to do so before God. Misled or culpaple, they are our brothers. Their situation is painful and perilous. We are not in numbers here, and our enemies are the stronger, the more arrogant. If they persist in wishing to drive us from Blois by violence, it is certainly better to come to the trial of competition than to that of strength. Let us, therefore, be patient. I shall know how to be resigned. If, in one way or the other, my honour must be compromised, I will sacrifice my own interests to those of others; and, if my father condemns me, my conscience will absolve me.'

CHAPTER XIII.

When the business of the meeting was completed, the gavots took their seats at the table. The competition was decided upon, and the Corinthian was among the number of competitors elected. This news caused him an emotion in which joy had a larger share than regret, it must be confessed. Although sincere in his devotedness to Pierre Huguenin, and in his virtuous resolutions with regard to the Savinienne, his young heart thrilled, in spite of him, at the idea of passing several months near her whom he loved, and of being acquitted, by the will of destiny, of what would have been wrong under other circumstances. It must also be said that the Corinthian had already more than once felt the excitement of ambition. He had too much talent not to be somewhat sensible to glory; and if, in a movement of generous enthusiasm, he returned to the evangelical ideas which the pious Savinienne had instilled, very soon afterwards the seductions of art and of fame resumed their natural dominion over that artist and child-like soul, candid, ardent, and changeable as the light clouds of a beautiful morning sky.

He endeavoured to receive the news of his election with a disdainful resignation. But, in spite of himself, the contagious gaiety of his companions restored, by degrees, the roses of his complexion, and the aspect of the Savinienne filled his heart with a hope full of agitations and conflicts. His voice did not mingle with the cheerful jests of the table; but there was in his gravity an expression of serious and profound joy, which did not escape Pierre. From time to time the eyes of the amiable Corinthian seemed to ask for mercy of his austere friend; then they were involuntary turned towards the Savinienne, and a cloud of passionate delight immediately obscured them. 'Take care of yourself, my child!' said Pierre to him, while the noise of the guests covered their voices. 'Do not forget that just now you wished to depart in order to fly from the danger. Now that you must brave it, do not be rash.'

'Do you not see that my hand trembles as it holds my glass?' replied the Corinthian. 'I am more to be pitied than blamed. I feel that fate is more powerful than I, and I pray God that he may give me some of your strength to sustain me.'

At this moment several of the young men of the society returned from a walk they had taken about the city, since the meeting. They related that they had seen a great feast of the drille carpenters in a wineshop. On passing before the door they had cast a glance into their hall, and had remarked soldiers at table with them. The war songs of the devorants had struck their ears :

"Gavot abominable,
Mille fois detestable,
Pour toi plus de pitie," &c.*

Then one of those young gavots, transported with indignation, had advanced to the threshold of the wineshop, and written over the door, with his white chalk : 'Cowards ! cowards !'

This action of an insane bravery had the luck not to be remarked by any of the persons in the hall. The guests were apparently too much absorbed by the pleasures of the table, and those who served them too busy to observe what passed before their eyes. The other gavots did not wait for this rash inscription to attract notice ; they did not even take time to rub it out. Seeing that *Marseillais le Resolu* (this was the name of their young companion) was about to rush into the den of lions, like a martyr of the earlier ages, they saved him from certain death by throwing themselves upon him, and dragging him away almost by force. They related what he had done,—giving praise to his courage, but blaming his imprudence. The dignitary united with them in reproaching him for not having repressed a movement of anger which might occasion new disasters to the society. 'May Heaven grant,' said he, 'that blood will not be needed to efface what you have written !'

Towards the close of supper they talked of the piece proposed for competition. It was to be the model of a pulpit, which should unite all the qualities of science and all the beauties of art. Pierre, submitting to the decision which had been adopted, gave his advice without pride and without affectation. All dissension was forgotten between him and his companions. The ambitious ones with whom he had clashed, having nothing more to fear from his opposition, did not blush to listen to him ; for he discoursed upon his art with an incontestable superiority. Already the gavots indulged in flattering dreams ; they thought themselves sure of victory, and the beautiful master-piece rose as a gigantic monu-

* Abominable Gavot,
Thousand-fold detestable,
For thee no more pity, &c.

ment in their imaginations, excited by the fumes of glory, when violent blows shook the doors of the inn. 'Who can it be that announces himself so brutally?' said the dignitary, rising. 'Certainly not one of our brothers.'

'Let us open, nevertheless,' replied the companions. 'We shall see if any one will enter our house without saluting us.'

'Do not open,' cried the maid-servant, who had looked from the upper windows. 'They are not friends. They are armed. They come with bad intentions.'

'It is the carpenters of father Soubise,' said a companion who had looked through the keyhole; 'let us open! It is a deputation who wish to parley.'

'No, no!' said little Manette, quite frightened; 'there are great ugly men with moustaches. They are robbers. And she ran to take refuge in the arms of her mother, who became pale, and instinctively pressed behind the Corinthian's chair.

'Well! let us open, nevertheless,' cried the companions; 'if they are enemies, they will find somebody to talk to.'

'One moment!' said the dignitary. 'Let us run and get our canes to receive them. We do not know what may happen.'

The blows ceased to shake the door; but threatening voices rose without. They sang a verse of the savage song of the sixteenth century:

"Tous ces Gavots infames
Iront dans les enfers
Bruler dedans les flammes
Comme des Lucifers!"*

The companions rose tumultuously. Some wished to defend the door, which those without gain attempted to burst, while others collected the weapons. But before they had time, a window was broken, the door flew into pieces, and the carpenters rushed into the hall with horrid shouts. Then succeeded a scene of fury and confusion which it is impossible to describe. Each armed himself with what was nearest his hand. To the terrible ironshod canes of the devorants, and the sabres of the soldiers of the garrison, several of whom had allowed themselves to be drawn into the ranks of the drilles after a debauch, the gavots opposed the fragments of bottles, with which they struck the assailants in the face, the table under which they overthrew them, the spits which they

* All those infamous Gavots
Will go into the hells
To burn within the flames
Like so many Lucifers.

used as lances, and with which one of the most vigorous pinned his adversary to the wall. Their defence was legitimate: it was obstinate and deadly. Pierre Huguenin had at first thrown himself between the combatants, hoping to make his voice heard, and prevent the carnage. But he was violently repulsed; and was soon obliged to think of defending his own life and that of his brothers. The Savinienne rushed to the stairs leading to her chamber, and scaled them with the strength and rapidity of a panther, carrying her two children in her arms. She pushed them into the loft, energetically showing them a back passage by which they could fly towards the granary, and place themselves in safety. Then she returned, and full of indignation, of courage and despair, she re-descended the stair-case and threw herself into the melee, thinking that the sight of a woman would disarm the fury of the assailants. But they no longer saw anything, and struck at random. She received a blow which, doubtless, was not intended for her, and fell, bathed in blood, into the arms of the Corinthian. Until then this young man, struck with amazement, had fought feebly. It was the first time he had ever taken part in these horrible dramas, and he experienced such a disgust that he seemed rather to seek to be killed than to defend himself. When he saw the Savinienne wounded, he became furious; and, like Tasso's young Rinaldo, he showed that, if he had the beauty of a woman, he had the strength and intrepidity of a hero. The unfortunate who had shed some drops of the mother's precious blood, payed for it with all his own. He fell with his face beaten in, and his head crushed, never to rise again.

This terrible expiatory deed turned against the Corinthian all the efforts of the devorants. Until then, it seemed that they pitied or despised his youth, and wished to spare him; but when they saw him stand, with flaming eyes and bloody arms, between the fainting mother and the dead body extended at his feet, there was a general shout, and twenty arms were raised to annihilate him. Pierre had only time to spring before him and make a rampart for him of his body. He received several wounds, and both would certainly have perished overwhelmed by numbers, had not the guard, attracted by the noise, entered the house, and with great difficulty separated the combatants. Pierre, notwithstanding the blood he was losing, retained all his strength and presence of mind. He carried the Savinienne to her chamber; and having laid her on her bed, he compelled the Corinthian, who had followed him, to take refuge in the loft, in order to avoid being arrested. He hid him in the straw, brought the children, frozen with fear, to their mother's side, and again descended to the hall in time to assist some of the companions

of his devoir to fly. Those most furious in the combat had been seized; they were carried to prison. Others had dispersed in time, leaving their enemies in conflict with the guard. Pierre had at first the intention of giving himself up to the authorities, in order to render public testimony of his innocence and that of his friends. But when he saw the house full of soldiers, the dead and the wounded, he thought of the deserted state in which the Savinienne was at this deplorable crisis, and kept aloof until the guard had retired, bearing the dead and carrying away the prisoners of both parties, the first to the hospital, the last to prison. Then he ordered the maid-servant to wash away as quickly as possible, the blood with which the house was inundated, and he ran to find a physician for the Savinienne; but his exertions were in vain. There had been so many wounded to succour and transport, that all persons acquainted with medicine, who could be found, were busied. He returned quite alarmed; but he found the Savinienne erect like the strong woman of the Bible. She had had herself washed and bound up her wound, which fortunately was not serious, and which left only a slight scar upon her broad and pure brow. She had comforted her children and put them to bed, and she was helping her servant to restore order to the house, that important and sacred end towards which tend, without relaxation and without distraction, all the cares and all the strength of a woman of the people. Her heart was, nevertheless, tormented by cruel anxieties; she did not know what had become of the Corinthian, or which of her friends had perished. She thought of the pitiless chastisements which the law would inflict, perhaps upon the innocent as well as upon the guilty; and, suffering from this anguish, pale as death, her heart swollen, her hand trembling, she was working, in the depth of the night, to recollect the scattered ruins of her devastated hearth, without shedding a tear, without uttering a complaint.

When she saw Pierre Huguenin return, she had not courage enough to question him; but she smiled upon him with a sublime expression of joy, which seemed to accept the greatest misfortunes in exchange for the safety of a friend like him. He took her by the hand and hastened with her to the loft where he had hidden and locked in the Corinthian. During this forced seclusion, the desolate young man, in prey to a thousand anxieties, had at first attempted, at every risk to re-enter the house, in order to learn the fate of his companions, and especially of the mother. But emotion and fatigue had deprived him of the strength necessary to force the doors which Pierre, fearing his imprudence, had barricaded against him. He was so exhausted that he almost fainted on seeing his mistress and his friend out of danger. They

examined and bound up his wounds, which were quite serious. They made for him, with mattresses and coverings, an impromptu bed, in a chamber which they also improvised for him, by piling up bundles of straw in the barn-loft. It was necessary to keep him concealed; for he was one of those most compromised in the matter, and neither Pierre nor the Savinienne thought it best to trust to the integrity of the law in distinguishing the aggrieved from the aggressors.

When Pierre had thought of everything and exhausted the remains of his strength, the Savinienne still had to take care of him. He also was wounded and weakened, and especially broken in the depths of his soul. What must not suffer, in fact, that organization always borne towards the ideal, and incessantly thrown back towards the most brutal reality! When he was alone, he felt desperate; and, remembering the blows he had been compelled to inflict, seeing rise before him all the spectres of sleeplessness and fever, he wished for death, and wrung his hands in the excess of a horrible sorrow. Sleep at last came to his relief, and he remained plunged in an almost lethargic exhaustion from break of day until night.

The Savinienne rested hardly two or three hours. She divided her cares, all the remainder of the day, between her daughter, whom fear had also rendered ill, the Corinthian, and l'Ami-du-trait.

The dignitary and those of the companions who had escaped in time from the scene of combat, came to see and comfort her. Several of the wounded were out of danger; they concealed from her, as much as possible, the agony and death of some others. But they still feared the result of judicial search. They had already sent away a companion who, like Amaury, had killed one of the enemies, and they advised Pierre to fly also with the Corinthian. As soon as the latter could walk, that is, on the next night, Pierre conducted him to the cabin of the Vaudois, to remain until he could take the diligence and go to Villepreux. The good carpenter hid him in his garret, and bestowed upon him all the cares of friendship. He had become a physician himself, as he asserted, in consequence of having had so much to do with physicians. He went to work to apply his medicines, and Pierre, tranquillized respecting his friend, returned to Blois, determined not to abandon his captive brothers, so long as his efforts and his testimony could be of service for their justification and deliverance.

He was returning, by the early morning light, along the verdant banks of the Loire, in prey to a great sadness, to a deep disgust. This fatal necessity of maintaining a bitter partisan warfare against the men of the people, against those children of poverty and labour whom he piously considered as his bro-

thers, and whom he could have wished, at the cost of his life, to reconcile and unite in one single family, was for him a remorse before God, a punishment, a shame in his own eyes. And yet, what could he do? Had he to reproach himself with having neglected anything to preserve peace? Had he not exposed himself to the blame of his own companions, in wishing to prove to them that the devorants were men like themselves? And now those devorants had had a fresh attack of fury, and the gavots, persecuted for their faith, were cast, for a long time doubtless, into a fanaticism which had become necessary for the preservation of their independence, into a hatred almost legitimate after such outrages?

Pierre was not sufficiently advanced (though he was perhaps more so than the strongest minds of that epoch) to make a clear distinction between principle and fact. This courageous acceptance of truth, this preserving faith in principles, which enables us to live in the thought of a better future, is still a very new notion to us, and one the habit of which is with difficulty introduced into our uneasy and troubled minds. We have been so long educated in the custom of judging what should be from what is, and what can be from what has been done, and we every moment become discouraged on seeing the present so frequently disappoint our hopes. The reason is that we do not yet sufficiently understand the laws of life in humanity. We should study society as we observe man, in its physiological and social developement. Thus the cries, the tears, the absence of reason, the immoderate instincts, the dislike of restraint and of rule, all that characterizes the childhood and adolescence of the man, are they not so many powerful, but inevitable crises, necessary to the blooming and maturity of that germ which grows in suffering, as does everything that is born in the bosom of the universe? Why should we not apply this idea to humanity? Why should the present make us renounce our ideal? Why, since we are present at the manifestation of the idea in the world, should we not accept its failures, as scientific men observe without terror those of light in the imperishable stars. But, children as we are, and ignorant as we are, we often believe that the child is about to die when he becomes a man, that the suns will be extinguished because their centres are covered with clouds.

If Pierre Huguenin could have better understood the past and the future of the people, he would not have been so much affrighted by the present into which he was cast. He would have said to himself that the principle of fraternity and equality, always at work in the souls of the oppressed, was at that moment undergoing a salutary crisis; and that the companionship, which is one of the forms attempted by the fraternal instinct, then owed its preservation

to those struggles, to those combats, to that bloodshed, to that insane pride. At a time when the mind of the enlightened classes had not yet thought of the most important of truths, of the most necessary of initiations, it was Providence which preserved in the people that spirit of mystical association and of republican enthusiasm, through all the varieties of family, the jealousies of trade, the prejudices of sect, and the brutal heroism of partisanship.

The proletary philosopher struggled in vain to solve that obscure problem of the notion of good and evil; a fictitious distinction in the order of abstract things, in the presence of the eternal idea; true only in the order of created things, in the temporary manifestation. He therefore allowed himself to be depressed by transitory reverses; and, in his need of truth and justice, he was even so impious as to blush for his brothers. He was almost ready to hate them, to abandon them, to carry elsewhere his faith, his love, his zeal. But to whom could he carry them henceforward? Unfortunate, said he to himself, who would receive you, branded as you are by poverty, bound by the slavery of labour? Those enlightened, polished classess, towards whom a secret attraction and dangerous dreams so often draw you, could you even understand their language, and could they accomodate themselves to the rudeness of yours? Doubtless, among the youths who are taught in schools, among those powerful and proud industrialists who struggle against the nobility and clergy, among those brave soldiers who, they say, conspire on every side against tyranny, there are generous wills, pure principles, democratic feelings; and while we, blind unfortunates, exhaust our energy in criminal strife against our own race, those enlightened agitators work for us, conspire for us, ascend the scaffold for us! Yes, it is for us, it is for the people, that the Bories, the Bertons die, with so many others whose blood has flowed without the people's understanding it, without the people's being moved! Oh, yes! these are heroes, martyrs; and we, the ungrateful and stupid people, we did not tear those victims from the hands of the executioner, we did not break open the doors of their prisons, we did not overthrow their scaffolds! But where were we then, and what do we now that we do not think of avenging them?

'Excuse me for disturbing your reverie,' said an unknown voice at this moment in Pierre Huguenin's ear. 'But I have sought for you a long while, and I must break the ice at a single blow, for time is precious; I hope we shall soon understand each other.'

Pierre, surprised at this strange preamble, looked at the person who thus addressed him, from head to foot. He was

quite a young man, well dressed, and with a very pleasant face. There was in his manner a mixture of good-nature and rudeness which pleased at first sight. He had, or he affected something of a military bearing under his citizen's dress; his words were quick, brief, decided, and his half-lisp indicated a Parisian.

'Sir,' replied Pierre, after having carefully examined him, 'I believe you take me for another; for I have not the honour to know you in any way.'

'Well! as for me, I know you,' replied the stranger, 'and I know you so well that I read at this moment in your thoughts, as I see the bottom of this limpid water which flows at our feet. You are thoughtful, engrossed, so much so that I have followed you a quarter of an hour without your noticing me. You are a victim to profound melancholy, for your face bears the marks of it in spite of you. Do you wish me to tell you what you are thinking of?'

'You will do me pleasure,' said Pierre, smiling, for he began to think the young man crazy.

'Pierre Huguenin,' returned the stranger, with an assurance which made our hero start, 'you are thinking of the uselessness of your efforts, of the hardness of the hearts on which you wish to act, of the strength of the obstacles which paralyse your energy, your zeal, and your great intentions.'

Pierre was so struck at seeing before him a man who seemed to rise out of the earth, and reflect like a mirror his most secret thoughts, that he almost believed in a supernatural apparition, and he had not the power to reply by a single word, so much did he feel troubled, almost frightened, by what he heard.

'My poor Pierre,' continued the stranger, 'you have reason to be tired and disgusted with the trade you follow, of talking to the deaf, and of displaying the torch of truth before the blind. You will never accomplish anything with those stupid souls. You will not reform those ferocious customs. You are a superior man, and yet you cannot perform such a miracle. There is nothing to hope from your companions.'

'What do you know of that—you, who speak with so much assurance of what you presume, and do not know! Do you know the workingmen that you decide thus against them? Are you one of us? Do you wear the same livery that we do?'

'I wear one more beautiful,' returned the stranger! 'that of a servant of humanity.'

'You must be a very busy servant,' said Pierre, shaking his

head with an air of disdain; for his new acquaintance began to inspire him rather with distrust than sympathy.

The stranger, pursuing his course of divination, said to him, with a benevolent smile: 'Dear master Huguenin, at this moment you are asking yourself if I am not a man of the police, a provocative agent.'

Amazed at this new prodigy, Pierre bit his lips. 'If I have that thought,' replied he, 'are you not entirely prepared to endure the consequences—you, who accost me in so strange a manner—you, whom I do not know?'

'Why,' returned the stranger, 'do you wish that so simple an action as that of accosting you on the highway should have any mysterious motive? Are you, then, one of those men who tremble at the simple word conspiracy, and who take their shadow for a gend'arme?'

'I have no reason to fear anything, and am not of a timid character,' replied Pierre.

'Put yourself at your ease with me, then,' returned the stranger, 'for you see in me a man who travels for the purpose of studying and knowing men. Penetrated by an ardent love of humanity, I extend to all classes of society the ardour of my investigations, and, in all, I seek for noble souls, enlightened minds. When I meet them on my way, I experience the necessity of fraternizing with them.'

'So,' said Pierre, smiling, 'you exercise the profession of philanthropist! But if you proceed solely as you have just said, it is not so useful a profession as I had imagined; for, if you seek only the elect of men,—they having no need of being reformed,—it follows, that in associating with them on your passage you journey absolutely for your pleasure. In your place, I should think I employed my time better by seeking out misguided men, uncultivated minds, in order to put them right or to teach them.'

'I see that you deserve your reputation,' returned the stranger, laughing in his turn; 'you are a man of reasoning and logic, and with you one must be careful of all he says.'

'Oh! do not believe,' said Pierre with gentleness, 'that I pretend to discuss with you. No, sir: when I question, it is to inform myself.'

'Well, my friend, know that I do extend my solicitude to all men. To these, respect; to those, compassion; to all, devotedness and fraternity. But does it not seem to you, that, in the age in which we live, having to struggle against tyranny and the corruption it occasions, against the priestly spirit and the fanaticism it excites, the first thing to be done is to collect men of capability and come to an understanding with them, in order to prepare the work of liberalism?'

'I do not presume,' said Pierre, smiling, 'that you came

to me for that purpose. I have everything to learn, nothing to teach.'

'I will prove to you that you may be very favourable to my regenerating views. You know the popular element, in the bosom of which you live, even while detaching yourself from it by your intellectual superiority. You can give me good ideas respecting the means of spreading light and propagating healthy political ideas in that region.'

'These are questions which I should wish to ask of you. Is it possible that you could have waited for me to commence so vast and so difficult a mission? Oh! you are laughing at me! You know well that a poor workman cannot open for you any path towards that immense object, and that, at the most, he would walk tremblingly in the suite of the enlightened persons who may be willing to guide him.'

'I begin to see that, in spite of your excessive modesty, we understand each other quite well. I will, therefore, speak more clearly. If you wish to become an associate in the great work of the physical and moral deliverance of the people, sympathizing men will extend their arms to you; and, instead of leaving you in the obscure rank in which you seem to retrench yourself, they will facilitate the noble impulse, will find the high employment of your energetic faculties. During the few days I have passed at Blois, I have employed my time quite well. I know already what can be expected from you. I have formed around you connexions which you will soon be made acquainted with. I have already seen, already observed you. I know that you unite to an intrepid courage a spirit of conciliation which must, unhappily, fail in the obscure struggles in which you are engaged, but which will render immense services to the country, when you have entered upon a broader path, more fruitful, and more worthy of you. I do not wish to say more to you at present. You could not grant me that entire confidence at which I aim, and which I shall soon be able to acquire. Besides, we are now in the city, and it is very important for me not to be seen with you. I ask of you only one thing: that is, to obtain information respecting me from the persons whose names are here set down, and to have the goodness to be present at the meeting mentioned in this card. It will serve you as a pass. You will come there with certain precautions which will be pointed out to you, and you will be free to bring with you those of your friends for whom you can answer as for yourself. Farewell, till we meet again.'

The stranger earnestly shook the workman's hand, and departed with a quick step.

CHAPTER XIV.

Pierre had no leisure to reflect long upon this strange encounter. He had much to do, for in spite of his inward discouragement, he did not cease to assist his unhappy companions with all his power. He felt so strongly the sacredness of that duty, that he no longer wished to take into consideration his father's anxiety and impatience, and overcame his personal troubles with heroism. He ran the whole day, with the dignitary and the principal members of the society, from the prison to the hospital, from the houses of the authorities to those of the lawyers. He succeeded in procuring the release of some of his comrades who had been arrested without sufficient reason. His activity, his air of frankness, and his natural eloquence made such an impression upon the magistrates, that they interposed no obstacle to his zeal. On the next day he had sadder duties to fulfil; this was to render the last honours to one of his comrades, killed in the battle. This ceremony, at which all the gavots in Blois were present, and the dignitary presided, was accomplished according to the rites of the devoir of liberty. After the coffin was lowered into the grave, Pierre knelt down, and pronounced a short and beautiful prayer to the Supreme Being, conformably to the text of the sacred books; then he rose, and advancing one foot to the brink of the open grave, extended his hand to one of the companions, who assumed the same attitude, seized his hand, and inclined his face towards his to exchange the mysterious words which are not uttered aloud; after which, they embraced, and all the other companions slowly accomplished the same form, departing two by two from the grave, after having thrown into it three handfuls of earth.

As the gavots were leaving the cemetery, another procession arrived, and the inimical phalanxes met in a gloomy silence upon the place of rest, in the asylum of eternal peace. It was the drille carpenters who also came to bury their dead. There were doubtless bitter thoughts, and vainly combated regrets in their souls; for their eyes avoided those of the gavots, and the gend'armes, who kept guard upon them from a distance, were not needed to preserve order in the two camps. The circumstances were too mournful for either side to think of attempting reprisals. The gavots heard, as they retired, the strange howls of the devorant carpenters, a kind of savage lamentation with which they accompany their so-

lemnities, and the intonations of which, regulated by rhythm, have a hidden meaning.

On the evening of that sad day, Pierre went to visit the Corinthian, and his joy was great at finding him almost restored. Thanks to the good treatment, and the learned prescriptions of Jambe-de-bois, Amaury could hope to depart in a short time, and Pierre explained to him the labours he was to undertake at the chateau of Villepreux. He then left him with the promise that he would speak seriously of him to the Savinienne, as soon as he found a favourable opportunity.

He found it that very evening. Remaining alone with her and the sleeping children, in the care of whom he assisted her, he naturally entered upon the subject; for she never failed to question him every evening, with solicitude, respecting the Corinthian's situation. He spoke of his friend with the delicacy which he knew how to introduce into everything. The Savinienne having listened to him attentively, replied: 'I can speak to you with sincerity, and confide in you as in a man superior to others, my dear son Villepreux. It is very true that I have had for the Corinthian a friendship stronger than I ought, and than I wished. I have nothing with which to reproach him, neither have I in my conscience anything voluntary with which to reproach myself. But, since Savinien's death, I have been more frightened at this friendship than I was during his life. It seems to me that it is a great fault to think of another than him, while the earth which covers him is still fresh. The tears of my children accuse me, and I incessantly ask pardon of God for my folly. But, since we are here for an explanation, and your near departure compels me to speak of these things sooner than I could have wished, I will tell you everything. Very culpable ideas sometimes came to me during Savinien's life. Certainly I would have given my own life to prevent his leaving this world; but in fine, as he was older than I, and for two years the physicians had told me that he had a very dangerous complaint, it came to my mind in spite of me, that, if I should leave my dear husband, my duty would be to marry again; and then I said to myself, tremblingly, I know well whom I should choose. Similar ideas came to Savinien when he felt himself more ill than usual; and when he was obliged to keep his bed all the time, they came to him so often that at last he spoke to me of them. 'Wife,' said he to me a few days before his death, 'I am not well, and I rather fear that you will become a widow sooner than I expected. This troubles me for your sake, and that of our poor children; you are still too young to remain exposed to all the friendships which the companions will feel for you. As I know you are an honest woman, you will suffer for the

want of some one to impose respect upon them, and you will perhaps leave your inn. That would be the ruin of our children; for you are not very strong, and what a woman can earn is so small a thing, that you will not have enough to give an education to our little ones. Still you know that my whole idea was to have them well taught to read, to write, and to keep accounts; without these, no one is good for anything, and I can see you from here, all three, sink into poverty. If I could have acquitted my debt towards Romanet le Bon-soutien, I should be rather more easy; but I have not been able to repay even a third of what he lent me, and I am greatly troubled to think I shall die a bankrupt, especially towards a friend. There is only one way to remedy this; that is, for you to become Bon-soutien's wife if I leave you. He has an honest attachment for you; he considers you as the best of women, and he is right; he loves our children as if they were his nephews: he will love them as if they were his own children when he is your husband. I have more confidence in him than in any other man I know. Our stock belongs to him, since he has paid for the greater part of it; he will thus recover his property, and keep up our business. He will give an education to the children; for he is learned himself, and he knows the value of it. In fine, he will make you happy, and will love you as I love you. This is why I wish you both to promise me that you will marry together if I am obliged to leave you.'

'I did, as you may believe, all in my power to make him give up this idea; but the more he felt himself dying, the more he thought of deciding my lot. Finally, on the day when he received the last sacrament, he sent for Bon-soutien; and, on his death-bed, he joined our hands. Romanet promised everything, weeping; as for me, I wept too much to promise. My Savinien breathed out his soul, leaving me desolate at losing him, and very sad at being engaged to a man whom I respect and love, but whom I could not wish to take for my husband. Still I feel that I ought to do so, that I cannot remain a widow, that the lot of my children and the last will of my husband command me to take that wise and generous man, who has placed all his property in our hands, and to whom I could not restore it without ruining my family. Such is my situation, master Pierre; this is what you must tell the Corinthian, in order that he may think no more of me, as I am going to pray the good God to enable me to think no more of him.'

'All that you have told me shows you to be a virtuous woman and a good mother,' replied Pierre. 'I approve your resolution to combat for the present the recollection of the Corinthian, and I shall advise him not to entertain too vivid

hopes. Still, my good mother, permit me, and promise my friend, not to believe absolutely that all is lost. I knew our Savinien well enough to be very sure that, if he could have read in the bottom of your heart, it is to the Corinthian that he would have bethrothed you. He would have trusted to the future of that young man, so courageous, so good, so skilful in his art, and as devoted to his memory, to his widow and children, as Bon-soutien himself can be. I know Bon-soutien also; I know that his sentiments are too elevated to accept the sacrifice of your life and feelings. He will listen to reason. He will suffer without doubt; but he is a man—a man of great heart. He will remain your friend and Amaury's. As to the debt, I beseech you to think no more of it, my mother. You must restore to Romanet all that he has lent. If, at the termination of your mourning, the Corinthian, in spite of his courage and his talents, has not been able to complete the sum, it will be for me to find it; and your son shall repay me when he is of age and understands business. Do not reply to me on that point. We have many cares just now, and must not lose time in useless words. I shall say to the Corinthian only what he ought to know; and I trust in the honour of the dignitary not to address you, during the continuance of your mourning, a single word which may compel you to an engagement or a rupture. Weep for your good Savinien without remorse and without bitterness, my brave Savinienne. Do not weep for him so much as to make yourself ill: you owe yourself to your children, and the future will recompense you for the courage you must now have.'

Having said this, Pierre embraced the Savinienne as a brother embraces his sister; then he approached the cradle of the children to kiss them:

'Give them your blessing, master Pierre,' said the Savinienne, kneeling beside the cradle and raising the curtain; 'the blessing of an angel like you will bring them happiness.'

CHAPTER XV.

The recital of what had passed between the Savinienne and Pierre gave courage to the Corinthian and hastened his recovery. He fixed upon the next day for his departure to Villepreux, resolved to deserve his happiness by a year at least of courage and resignation. Pierre, without ceasing to be actively engaged for his dear prisoners, had to think of obtaining a second companion to escort the Corinthian on his journey and assist him in the work. It was not absolutely necessary that this second associate in the labours on the château of Villepreux should be a distinguished artist; Amaury's talent was enough for both. He only required a workman who should be skilful and industrious in sawing, cutting, and cantling. The dignitary presented to him an honest native of Berry, who was not handsome, although he was called, by antithesis, no doubt, *la Clef-des-cœurs* (the key of hearts). He was a good fellow and a quick workman, so all the companions said. This useful Berrichon, found, enlisted, and informed of the work intrusted to him, made up his bundle, which did not take long, for he had not many clothes; and the rouleur having secured his discharge, that is, having ascertained, from the master whom he was leaving, and from the mother, that he owed nothing and that nothing was due to him, held himself ready to depart. Pierre, on this day also, made many efforts, not without success, for his imprisoned comrades; and the horizon beginning to clear up on that side, he started for the Bower of wisdom, accompanied by his Berrichon, with his heart somewhat less oppressed than it had been on the preceding days. As they walked, he informed Clef-des-cœurs of the aversion which his father felt towards the companionship, and endeavoured to make him understand the conduct he must observe with master Huguenin. Clef-des-cœurs was, certainly, a very skilful workman, but a very awkward diplomatist. To his perfect ingenuity he added the singular pretension of being crafty, and of being able to carry a delicate affair to a desired conclusion. Pierre, who did not know him, mistrusted his promises. But the Berrichon renewed them with so much assurance, that Pierre said to himself, as he looked at him: We do sometimes see much sense and tact lodged, as by mistake, in those great heads whose dull and staring eyes do not

badly resemble the fictitious windows which are painted upon the walls of irregularly lighted houses.

It was night when they reached the Vaudois's door. It was closed with care, and they were obliged to give their names in order to obtain an entrance. 'What means this increased precaution?' said Pierre, in a low voice, as he embraced his host. 'Has the police got track of the Corinthian?' 'No, thank God,' replied la Sagesse: 'but he has left his garret on the invitation of our traveller, and we must be careful; for this is the house of the good God: every one may enter.'—'What traveller?' asked Pierre, astonished. 'Him whom you know well,' replied the Vaudois, 'since you come to the rendezvous; he is waiting for you there with some persons of your acquaintance.'

Pierre understood nothing from these words. He entered the hall, and saw, with some surprise, the mysterious stranger who had accosted him three days before on the banks of the Loire, at table with the dignitary, one of the four old master-locksmiths of the devoir of liberty, and a young lawyer of Blois, whom Pierre Huguenin had known during his first residence in that city. The latter came to him, and taking his hand in an affectionate manner, led him to the table: 'I have many reproaches to make to you, master Huguenin,' said he to him, 'for not coming to see me during the week you have been here, and for not having entrusted to me the defence of your comrades inculpated in this last affair. You have apparently forgotten that we were friends, two years ago.'

This earnest welcome and the word *friends* rather astonished Pierre Huguenin. He remembered, indeed, that he had worked for the young lawyer, and that he had found him affable and benevolent; but he did not remember that he had been treated by him on this footing of equality. He therefore did not reply to his advances with all the freedom they seemed to demand. In spite of him, he turned his eyes coldly towards the stranger, who had risen at his approach, and now extended to him a hand which he hesitated to clasp. 'I hope that you no longer distrust me,' said the latter to him with a smile. 'You must have received satisfactory information respecting me, and you find me in company which must re-assure you completely. Take a seat with us, therefore, and taste these wines. I hope, in my capacity as a travelling clerk, to procure some for our host which will enable him to make more profit than heretofore.'

The Vaudois replied to this promise by a knowing smile, accompanied with a wink; and the Berrichon, who had the sympathetic habit of smiling whenever he saw any one else

smile, undertook to copy, as well as he could, the smile and the wink of the Vaudois. He made this benevolent grimace at the moment when the stranger was interrogating, with a glance, that unknown face, not handsome, it must be confessed, although gentle and full of candour. The pretended travelling clerk thought, therefore, from that air of intelligence, that the Berrichon was prepared for any overtures he might wish to make to him, and he extended his hand to him with the familiarity he had testified towards Pierre Huguenin. The Berrichon clasped that patronising hand with all his strength, and without the least mistrust, crying, in a penetrated tone, 'Well and good, here are citizens who are not proud.'

'I thank you, my brave fellow,' said the stranger, 'for having been willing to come and sup with us. This frank cordiality does you honour.'

'The honour is on my side,' replied the Berrichon, quite radiant; and he seated himself without ceremony by the side of the stranger, who began to help him.

Pierre saw clearly that there was a mistake here, and he did not think it wrong to profit by it in order to obtain information without compromising himself. He still thought, indeed, that the stranger might be a spy, a kind of provocative agent such as people imagined they saw everywhere, and such as there really were many of at that period. It was in the summer of 1823. The failure and severe punishment of numerous conspiracies had not yet discouraged the secret societies. They laboured perhaps with less boldness in France than during preceding years for the overthrow of the Bourbons, but they still did labour with some remains of hope upon the Spanish frontier. Ferdinand VII. was a prisoner in the hands of the liberal party, and they still flattered themselves with the hope of a revolt in the French army, commanded by the Duc d'Angoulême. Still the secrets of Carbonarism were somewhat discovered, and the government agents were everywhere on its track. Pierre had good reason to mistrust the recruiter, who endeavoured to obtain his sympathy. He saw, with terror, the Corinthian, the dignitary, and the master-locksmith, enter into connexion with him. He was resolved to save these latter from the snare which perhaps was laid for them, and he at first concealed his fears in order better to observe the unknown, into whose company chance had again brought him.

At first this one did not diclose himself, waiting for Pierre Huguenin to do so.

'Well,' said he, 'you came here *on business*, did you not?'

'Certainly,' replied Pierre, who wished to let him make the advances.

'And your companion also?' said the pretended travelling clerk, looking at the Berrichon, who was still smiling

'Yes,' replied Pierre, 'he is a man very fit for all kinds of business.'

The dignitary and the master locksmith turned and looked at Clef-des-cœurs with surprise. Pierre had some difficulty in keeping a serious countenance.

'So much the better!' cried the traveller. 'Well! my children, we shall be able to understand each other, and without much ceremony. Doubtless you have seen each other?' added he, looking alternately at the dignitary and Pierre Huguenin.

'Certainly,' replied Pierre, 'we see each other from morning to night.'

'I understand,' returned the traveller; 'then I shall not have much of a preamble to make with you.'

'Allow me,' said the dignitary; 'I have not spoken of you with my pays Villepreux.'

'In that case it is our friend the lawyer,' returned the traveller.

'No, not I, either,' replied the lawyer; 'but what matters it, since friend Pierre is here?'

'In fact,' said the traveller, 'that proves that he is sure of us; and as to ourselves, we are sure of him.'

Pierre drew the lawyer a little aside.

'Do you know this gentleman?' asked he of him in a low voice.

'As myself,' replied the lawyer.

Pierre addressed the same question to the dignitary, who made about the same answer.

At last he questioned also the master locksmith, who replied:

'No better than you do; but some friends have assured me of his good faith, and I am tempted to take hold of politics. Still I wish first to see what there is to depend upon.'

Pierre examined the Vaudois, and was soon convinced that a bond, if not mysterious, at least sympathetic, existed between him and the travelling clerk. He began therefore to change his opinion respecting the latter, and to listen to him with as much interest as he had at first felt repugnance.

He was preparing to warn him of the nullity of the Berrichon's part, when some one knocked at the door, and two persons in sporting jackets, having guns on their shoulders and game-bags at their sides, entered and deposited their guns and provision of game on the table, while they exchanged affectionate grasps of the hand with the lawyer and travelling clerk.

'Well,' said one of the sportsmen, whose face was not un-

known to Pierre Huguenin, 'we have not beat the bush in vain to-day—and I see we can make the same compliment to you,' added he, lowering his voice, and addressing the traveller, while he looked at Pierre, the Corinthian, the master locksmith, and the Berrichon, who had grouped themselves at one end of the table from feelings of discretion.

'Father Vaudois, put this hare on the spit for us,' said the other sportsman, whom Pierre recognised as one of the young physicians who had attended at the hospital the companions wounded in the mother's house; 'our dogs ran him down; he will be tender as a lark. We are dying with hunger and fatigue, and are very fortunate not to have to go to Blois for supper.'

'This is a lucky meeting,' cried the travelling clerk; 'and you shall help us taste the good wines of which I have brought samples. It is you, gentlemen, who will advise father Vaudois to replenish his canteen; and as you sometimes have to do with it on your shooting excursions, you will be sure not to find it dry.'

The two sportsmen praised the lucky chance which brought them into company with their friends. But Pierre, who observed them attentively, was not duped by this pretended chance meeting. He caught looks interchanged, which clearly proved to him that he, as well as the master locksmith, was the subject of a serious examination on the part of these gentlemen. The older of the two was a retired captain of the old army, established in the neighbourhood. Pierre had formerly seen him at Blois, and even given him some lessons in geometry. At that time, the captain, terrified by the privations imposed upon him by his half-pay, had desired to undertake some industrial profession and to establish a joiner's shop in his native village. But Pierre had found that military head harder than the brass of a cannon, and the education had not gone beyond the first elements of the science.

This brave captain welcomed his former preceptor with a manner full of cordiality. Born among the people, he had no difficulty in returning to them. The physician tried to show himself as fraternal with the workman; but he did not succeed: it was easy to see that his part was a forced one. The lawyer had more ease and tact; but Pierre remembered very well that this agreeable young man had not, two years before, the custom of shaking hands with him when he presented his bill of work.

They all seated themselves at table together. The Berrichon had complacently gone to help the Vaudois turn the spit. Pierre forgot him the sooner because he began to take

more interest in the conversation; it soon turned upon politics.

'What news, M. Lefort?' asked the captain of the travelling clerk.

'News from Spain,' replied the latter, 'and good news; Everything goes well for the good party; the Cortes assembled at Seville, have determined on Ferdinand's departure for Cadiz. The old hunks pretended to resist; they decided his forfeiture unanimously, and a provisory regency has been nominated: it is composed of Valdes, Ciscar, and Vigodet.'

This news appeared to excite transports of joy in the traveller's friends; but the workmen had small part in it. The former took pains to explain to them the importance of the success of liberalism in Spain, and the influence which the victory of that party would exercise in France. On this subject the politics of the day were discussed under all their aspects. Achille Lefort (this was the name of the travelling clerk) demonstrated the impossibility of submitting to the government of the Bourbons in Europe, and praised the advantages of the spirit of propagandism which was at work in several centres simultaneously for the destruction of tyrannical authorities. They became animated, and, when the smoking hare was brought on, the travelling clerk exhibited numerous samples of wine, which Pierre considered well chosen to be probably destined for the Vaudois's cellar. He mistrusted these stimulants to patriotism, and saw with pleasure that the master locksmith also kept on his guard. Though they no longer suspected the traveller's good faith, neither of them cared to enrol himself under a banner which would not represent his real feelings.

The Berrichon, having finished his functions as turnspit, disposed himself to fill those of a guest, and he placed himself on the right of M. Achille Lefort, who, as well as the advocate, laid himself out to please him. They succeeded easily, for no soul in the world was more benevolent at table than that of the Berrichon. Pierre sought for a pretext to remove him, but it was not easy; for the good cheer, united with the bumpers which were abundantly poured out for him on right and left, filled him with joy, and he was by no means disposed to listen to the advice to go to bed. Neither was it any more easy to make those present understand that this joyous guest was not an ardent neophyte; for he was there on the guarantee of Pierre, and the latter remembered that the traveller had said on leaving him: 'Bring whom you will, provided you can answer for them as for yourself.' Moreover the Berrichon entered valiantly into the ideas of his generous Amphitryons. They wished to sound his opinions, and he, desirous of pleasing, and very shrewd in

his way, took good care not to let it be seen that he did not understand a particle of the questions which were addressed to him. He replied to all with that ambiguity which distinguishes the Berrichon mechanic; and as soon as he had seized a word he repeated it with enthusiasm, drinking to the health of all the world. The old soldier spoke of Napoleon: 'Ah! yes, the little corporal?' shouted the Berrichon; 'vive l'empereur! I am for the emperor!' 'He is dead,' said Pierre to him sharply. 'Ah! yes, that is true. Well! hurrah for his child! vive Napoleon II.!' An instant after the lawyer spoke of Lafayette: 'Vive Lafayette!' cried the Berrichon,—'if that one is not dead too.' At last, the word republic escaped the lips of the traveller: the Berrichon cried out: 'Hurrah for the republic!' accompanying each exclamation with a fresh bumper.

The traveller, who had liked him very much at first, began to think him rather simple, and his looks questioned Pierre Huguenin. The latter only answered by constantly filling the Berrichon's glass, and exciting him to drink, so well, that in five minutes Clef-des-cœurs threatened to go to sleep across the table. Pierre took him in his strong arms, and though he was by no means a light bundle, carried him to the garret and deposited him on the Corinthian's bed. Then he returned to the table, and, freed from all his anxieties, took part in the conversation. Until then it had been a general talk, a kind of dissertation in which various opinions were discussed under a dubitative form. They had been animated nevertheless, but without bitterness, and the guests appeared to agree upon a principal point which they did not mention, but which seemed to establish a sympathetic bond between them. This lively and cheerful tone seduced Pierre; his curiosity was excited more and more, and he soon ceased to see that he was himself the object of others' curiosity. Still there was not much art in this; and the traveller, he who appeared to be the impromptu president of this meeting, showed so little reserve, that Pierre was surprised to see so young and so giddy a man intrusted with so dangerous a mission. But that young man expressed himself with a facility which pleased him, and which exercised a kind of fascination upon the dignitary and the Vaudois. Pierre felt himself drawn to lay aside his habitual reserve, and to put questions in his turn. 'You asserted just now, sir,' said he to the stranger, 'that there exists in France a powerful party ready to proclaim the republic?'

'I am certain of it,' replied the stranger, with a smile; 'I have travelled over France sufficiently, thanks to my business, to be in correspondence with Frenchmen of every class. I can assure you that I have everywhere found republican feelings;

and if, from any unexpected catastrophe, the Bourbons should be overthrown, the ultra liberal party would prevail over all the others.'

The old officer shook his head; the physician smiled. Each of them entertained a different thought. 'My opinion seems erroneous to these gentlemen,' resumed the traveller, politely: 'Well! what do you think of it, M. Huguenin? Do you believe that there is among the people any other feeling than a republican one?'

'I ask myself how there can be any other,' replied Pierre. 'Is not that your opinion, you who represent the people here with me?' added he, addressing the dignitary and the other workman.

The dignitary placed his hand upon his heart, and his silence was an eloquent answer. The Vaudois took off his cap, and raising it above his head: 'I would not wish to dye it in the blood of any Frenchman,' cried he; 'but to see this displayed over France, I would offer my head therewith.'*

The master locksmith reflected some moments, then he said with a reserved air: 'The republic did not do us all the good it promised: I cannot foresee what it might do for us at present; but, as to blood,' added he, with a concentrated fury, 'I should like to shed it. I should like to see that of our enemies flow to the last drop.' 'Bravo!' cried the traveller; 'O, yes! hatred to foreigners, war to the enemies of France! And you, you, master Huguenin, what wish do you form?'

'I could wish that all men would live together, as brothers,' replied Pierre; 'that is all I wish. With that, many evils can be borne; without that, liberty would do us no good.'

'I told you so,' returned the traveller, addressing his friends, 'he is a philanthropist, a philosopher of the last century.'

'No, sir, no, I do not think so,' replied Pierre, earnestly. 'The most liberal of all those philosophers was Jean Jacques Rousseau, and he has said that no republic was possible without slaves.'

'Can he have said such a thing?' cried the advocate. 'No, he did not say it; it is impossible!'

'Read the *Social Contract*,' replied Pierre, 'and you will be convinced of it.'

'So you are not a republican after the manner of Jean Jacques?'

'Nor you either, sir, I presume.'

'Consequently you are not one after the manner of Robespierre?'

'No, sir.'

* The liberty cap was the emblem of the republic.

'Well! You are one after the manner of Lafayette! Bravo!'

'I know not what is the manner of Lafayette.'

'His system is that of wise men, of the enemies of anarchy, of the real liberals in a word. A revolution without proscriptions, without scaffolds.'

'A revolution from which we are consequently far distant,' replied Pierre. 'And yet men conspire!—'

This word was followed by a general silence.

'Who conspires?' asked the traveller, with a cheerful assurance. 'Nobody here, that I know of.'

'Excuse me, sir,' replied Pierre; 'I do, I conspire.'

'You! how? with what object? with whom? against whom?'

'All alone, in the secret of my thoughts, dreaming almost always, weeping sometimes. I conspire against all the evils that exist with the object, if not with the hope, of changing all. Will you be of my party?'

'I am so!' replied the traveller, with a somewhat affected enthusiasm. 'You seem to me the master of us all, and I love that soul of a tribune and a reformer, that courage of a Brutus, that dark fanaticism, that profound firmness worthy of Saint Just and of Danton. I drink to the memory of those misunderstood heroes, illustrious martyrs of liberty!'

The toast of the traveller had but a single echo. The old master-locksmith extended his glass, and approached it to that of the orator. But he drew it back immediately, saying, 'I never touch my glass against an empty one. I have always mistrusted that.'

'You do not drink to the memory of those men?' said the Vaudois irresolutely to Pierre Huguenin.

'No,' replied Pierre, 'those are men and things which I do not well understand as yet, and which I feel myself too inferior to judge.'

The guests looked at Pierre Huguenin with some surprise; the physician wished to compel him to explain himself more fully.

'You seem to me,' says he, 'even while retrenching yourself within horrible scruples, to have very decided ideas. Why should you make a mystery of them to us? Are we not sure of each other here? and besides, do we do anything more than talk for the sake of talking? There are two political principles raised and discussed in France at this moment: the absolute government and the constitutional government. This is what now interests true Frenchmen, without its being necessary to refer to a past, painful to remember for some, dangerous to invoke for others. Things have changed their names; why not conform to the forms of language which

France has seen fit to adopt? That which our fathers called indivisible republic, we call constitutional charter. Let us accept that denomination, and enlist ourselves under that banner, since it is the only one now displayed.'

'That manner of seeing simplifies the question very much,' replied Pierre, smiling.

'And now that it is thus stated,' resumed the physician, 'will you tell us if you are for or against the charter.'

'I am,' replied Pierre, 'for this principle incribed at the head of the constitutional charter: All Frenchmen are equal before the law. But as I do not see this principle put in practice in the institutions consecrated by the charter, I cannot be earnest for a constitutional government, whatever it may be, so long as I see the text of the divine law written on your monuments, and obliterated from your consciences. The republic, the remembrance of which you invoke, did not so understand it, I believe; it sought to practice justice, and all means seemed good to this end. God is my witness that I am not a man of blood, and yet I confess that I understand much better that savage rigour which said to the overthrown powers: "Make peace with us, or be annihilated," than a vague system which would promise us equality without giving it to us.'

'I told you so!' cried the traveller, with his hypocritically superb tone of benevolence; 'he is a mountaineer, a pure jacobin of the old rock. Well! that is grand! it is frank, it is bold. What do you want more? we must take people as they are.'

'Doubtless,' replied the physician; 'but should we not, for the sake of more frankness and clearness, endeavour to come to an understanding with master Pierre? A man like him certainly deserves that we should take the trouble to show things to him in their true light.'

'I ask only that,' said Pierre. 'Look, are the doors well closed? Is there any one among you before whom I ought not to explain myself? As to myself, I feel neither fear nor embarrassment in telling you what I think. Whether you conspire or not, gentlemen, I care little; but you express wishes, feelings, and I do not see why I should not have the same pleasure. I have not come here to be questioned, I suppose, for you have nothing to learn from me, and you probably know all that I am ignorant of. Let me speak therefore. It is very evident that no one here believes in the love of the Bourbons for liberal institutions. It is very certain that we have neither confidence nor sympathy with that government, and that we should choose another to-morrow if we could. What would it be? Here we, simple people, are stopped, awaiting your answer. We find several name, on your programmes; for we sometimes read the newspapers

and we see that the liberals do not entirely agree among themselves. I believe, for instance, that, without going out of this room, we should find very different opinions. M. the lawyer would be for Lafayette, if I am not mistaken, and M. the physician for another whom he does not name. M. the captain would be for the king of Rome, and father Vaudois perhaps would not have him spoken of, nor I either: who knows? In fine, you have each some one in view, and I should gain nothing by knowing whom each wishes; thus it is not that I ask—'

'What do you ask then?' said the physician, rather drily.

'I do not ask who will be put in the place of the king; I ask what will be put in the place of the charter.'

'Ah, ha, the charter does not satisfy you!' said the lawyer laughing.

'That's not impossible,' replied Pierre somewhat archly. 'And if a part of the nation should be in the same case with me, what should you say to satisfy them?'

'Zounds! that is not very embarrassing,' said the traveller gaily. 'We would say to those who consider the charter badly made: Make it better.'

'And if we should say that we consider it wholly bad, and that we desire an entirely new one?' said the master-locksmith, who had listened to all this discussion with the spiteful austerity of an old jacobin.

'In that case, we should say to you,' replied Achille Lefort: 'Make another at once, and forward *the Marseillaise*.'

'Is that the feeling of all of you?' cried the old man with a voice of thunder, rising and casting a sombre look upon his stupified hearers: 'In that case I am yours, and I open my vein to sign the contract with my blood; otherwise, I break the glass in which I have drunk your healths.'

Speaking thus, he extended his right arm, bared to the elbow, and tatooed with cabalistic signs, while with the left he struck his glass upon the table and shook it with his violence. His gloomy and severe face, his heavy white eyebrows lowering over his inflamed eyes, all his aspect at once brutal and imposing, produced a disagreeable impression upon the lawyer and physician. At first the sally of the old *sans-culotte* had made them smile disdainfully; but that smile expired on their lips when they saw how serious was his action and how passionate his address. The Vaudois, electrified by his example, had risen also; and the Corinthian, who had listened to everything without saying a word, absorbed in a melancholy and deep attention, extended his hand upon that of the master-locksmith, and there kept it fixed and contracted, with paleness on his lips and indignation in his heart. Too modest and too proud to speak, he had felt a

mortal antipathy develope and increase within him from moment to moment against these conspirators with white hands; and each of their flattering words, each of their mocking smiles, had made a burning wound on his proud heart.

Pierre looked at the three proletaries standing in front of those reduced revolutionists, and forming a group like that of the oath of the three Swiss at Ruthly. He smiled to see their powerful attitude and their deep expression suddenly disconcert those men so maliciously polite. He felt at the same time a strong flow of tenderness towards those who were his brothers; and though he had neither the political passions of the two old men, nor the ambition of the younger, he swore in his heart faith and alliance to them and all their race; for on that side was divine right.

Still the traveller soon recovered from his surprise. Like a man accustomed to brave all kinds of resistances, and to endure all kinds of oppositions, he began gently to banter the old patriot.

'Well! what is this old brave about?' cried he gaily. Would not one say that he took us for political kidnappers, and had come to our supper as to a conspiracy? If you were heard outside, my master, we should get halters round our necks. Really, this comes from not knowing how to talk quietly about public affairs. Is not each one free in a wine shop to sing his song and toast his saint? If your's is saint Couthon or saint Robespierre, who hinders you from celebrating him? I don't see why you should be put out with us, unless you take us for gend'armes. Thank God, we are in a safe house, and we all know each other; if it were not so, you would frighten us, as Croquemitaine does the little children. Come, my master, empty your glass instead of cracking it. I will drink with you in honour of whomsoever you wish; for I respect all opinions, I salute all the glories of France. France! my friends! when a man loves France, he does not understand how her true children can quarrel among themselves about mere names. But we have had politics enough for this evening, since they disturb the good feelings of our meeting. Father Vaudois, let us talk of our business. Shall I send you, then, two barrels of this white wine. Directly, captain, we will talk of your quarter-cask of Burgundy; and, as to you, gentlemen, if you will make out your orders, I will enter them in my book at once.'

The physician and the lawyer began to speak seriously of their wine cellars, and every other subject of conversation was laid aside, as if the principal object of the supper had been for the purpose of tasting. Then they talked of hunting, of guns, of dogs and partridges, and soon every trace of a serious attempt, or project, was effaced from the meeting.

The dignitary took Pierre aside.

'The company in which you came here,' said he, alluding to the Berrichon, 'proves to me that you did not expect to meet certain persons. Still they appeared to expect you. Whence comes that error?'

'I asked myself the same question at first,' replied Pierre, 'and then I remembered that mention had been made to me of a rendezvous which I had forgotten. I only came to see the Corinthian off with the Berrichon, as was agreed between us.'

'Was not a note handed you?' said the dignitary.

'So there was,' said Pierre, 'but I have been engrossed by so many other cares that I did not even think of opening it. I must have it about me now.'

He searched in his pockets, and there found, in fact, the stranger's mysterious note. He unfolded it, approached the light of the fire, and read the names of the dignitary and the lawyer, as well as those of several other responsible persons well known to him at Blois.

'Those are the persons,' said Romanet, 'who were to assure you of the loyalty of this merchant; but since you have not consulted them, and we are here, we will be, if you desire his sureties with you, as we have been yours with him. As to the rendezvous, look at your note again; it must have been fixed for this evening, and the place where we are.'

'It is so, in fact,' replied Pierre, after having examined the paper again. 'But why this singular pretext: "*For the quality of the wines, consult messieurs so and so, &c.; To taste them, go to the inn of, &c.?*" It is true that my negligence in reading this note, proves how easily such things are lost.'

'And as the smallest pretext might occasion persecution, you would do well to burn it,' said the dignitary.

Pierre handed the note to the dignitary, who immediately threw it into the fire. 'Have you, by chance, gone further with those persons than I have?' asked Pierre, secretly designating those who had remained at the table.

The kind of embarrassment with which Bon-soutien replied, that he had never had other than business relations with the traveller, united with the silence he had observed during the discussion at supper, proved to Pierre that he was more pledged than he could confess. The pretext which he used as a motive for his intimacy with that agent for secret societies, was too improbable to leave the smallest doubt in that respect. Pierre understood that he ought not to question a man bound by oaths; and pretending to be satisfied by what he said, he left him, and went to help the Corinthian awaken the Berrichon, for they already heard at a distance the rolling of the vehicle which was to convey them to Ville-

preux. With some trouble they succeeded in getting their comrade to his feet; and, after fraternal farewells, l'Ami-du-trait and the Corinthian separated, one taking with the Berrichon the road to Villepreux, the other that to Blois, with the dignitary and the master locksmith.

'I believe,' said the latter on leaving the wine shop, 'that those persons have gone further with us than they intended; or that they thought us more simple than we are. No matter, certain things, half-guessed, are as sacred as if they had been entirely confided; is not that your feeling, pays Villepreux?'

'It is a law for my conscience,' replied Pierre Huguenin. The dignitary kept a profound silence. He had been pledged a long while, and perhaps was at that moment making reflections which had not before presented themselves to him. His two companions had the delicacy to speak to him of other matters.

While they were journeying towards the city, the Vaudois, absorbed in his thoughts, was arranging his plates and bottles with a melancholy air. M. Achille Lefort, pretended travelling clerk, in reality member of the recruiting committee of carbonarism, the Napoleonist Captain, the Lafayettist lawyer, and the Orleanist physician, grouped under the chimney-piece, conversed in a low tone.

THE PHYSICIAN: 'Well, my poor Achille, this is another of your stupidities. Ah! you want to meddle with sans-culottism! See how you succeed!'

ACHILLE LEFORT: 'That is your fault, your own. If I had been alone, I could have turned those people as I wished. I thought I could inspire them with confidence by showing to them responsible persons; I ought to have recollected that those persons are good for nothing. Do you think you can talk to the people, any of you?'

THE LAWYER, *to the physician:* 'Hear him talk about his people! One would say that we knew nothing of the people, we who are in continual connexion with them.'

ACHILLE LEFORT: 'You only see them when they are ill in body and mind. A lawyer! a physician! you have to do only with the sores of the moral and physical order! You are not acquainted with the people in good health. Is not that joiner an intelligent and well-informed man?'

THE PHYSICIAN: 'A great deal too much of a caviller, and too learned for a workman. You never can do anything with those brains stuffed with poorly-arranged reading and poorly-digested theories. If it were necessary to command a nation composed of such men, Napoleon himself would return to the earth in vain.'

THE CAPTAIN: 'In his time there were none such. He led them to the war, and there was no time for cavilling.'

THE LAWYER: 'There were such in his time, too; for there have always been. They cavilled in war as in peace; only, the great man, who did not favour philosophical discussions, requested them to have the goodness to be silent. He called them *ideologists.*'

THE CAPTAIN: 'He would have called you the same. Really, you appear to me very singular with your theories, your constitutions, and your distinction between absolute and constitutional governments! What is all that to us? We must drive away the enemy, make war with the foreigners and their Bourbons, the royalists and their black coats. Afterwards we will see. What need was there for your discussing with those honest workmen? You must talk to them about each taking a musket and twenty-five cartridges. That is the only language the French people understand.'

ACHILLE LEFORT: 'You see very well that it is not so, and that now-a-days they wish to see where they are going. I understand the matter, and have enrolled more than one who knows no better than I do the principle for which we have been working these twenty years. But who cares? Agitate, excite, associate, arm; with that we can go anywhere.'

THE PHYSICIAN: 'Even to the republic. A fine conclusion, and worthy the exordium.'

ACHILLE: 'Well! And why not the republic?'

THE LAWYER: 'Eh! Certainly, the republic? Can we ask for anything better, when it is represented by the purest, the most upright, the most moderate of men?'

THE PHYSICIAN: 'Those men are fools, if they think they can muzzle the people when they have let them loose.'

ACHILLE: 'Bah! The people are as gentle as a child, after victory. You do not know them, I tell you. I would undertake to manage ten thousand like those you have just seen.'

THE PHYSICIAN: 'Yes, like the old jacobin locksmith, for example! A pretty specimen! I confess that I feel no taste for those drinkers of blood. With that populace unchained, we should be overwhelmed; we should go straight to anarchy, to barbarism, to terror, to all the horrors of '93.'

ACHILLE: 'Well! let them come, if necessary; they are better than the darkness of the Jesuits, and the stupid flatness of tyranny. Let us march, act, no matter how, provided we feel ourselves live, and have something great to do. Was not Robespierre's time a grand one? A day of glory, an illustrious death, an immortal name—it is enough to give one the fever, even to think of it.'

THE LAWYER: 'He talks of all that like an amateur! If you are in love with martyrdom, why didn't you get yourself shot with Caron?'

ACHILLE: 'Bah! Caron, Berton, weak minds, fools! men

dissatisfied with their position, who would have kept quiet if the court had satisfied their personal ambition!'

THE CAPTAIN: 'Say, heroes, whom you have calumniated and meanly deserted! *Mille bombes!* if I had been listened to in those days, they would not have died on the scaffold. This is why your carbonarism makes me sick at heart. I blush to belong to it now.' (*He takes his gun, and prepares to go out.*)

ACHILLE: 'It is always just so. When we have suffered a reverse, we blame each other, until a victory unites us again. That's the old story!'

THE PHYSICIAN, *taking his gun to go:* 'To tell you the truth, I have no more faith in your victories. If the liberals fail in Spain, good night to the company. We must find something better than your carbonarism, to which nobody holds, where no one knows the other, and there is no mutual understanding.'

THE LAWYER: 'Good night, Achille. No matter; we are in the right road, we two. We have for us all the men of talent, Manuel, Foy, Keratry, d'Argenson, Sebastiani, Benjamin Constant, and the old patriarch with the white horse. Hey! father Lafayette! there's a man.'

ACHILLE: 'Good night, all of you. I don't care for your hare-brains. (*To the lawyer.*) 'Good night, my little Mirabeau in bud! We shall see a good deal come to pass yet before we die—be easy!'

THE LAWYER, *to Achille:* 'Good night, my Barnave!'

THE PHYSICIAN, *to Achille:* 'Good night, father Duchene!'

ACHILLE: 'As you choose! Either the one or the other, as may be, if I can serve France!'

THE CAPTAIN, *between his teeth:* 'Oh! for a good volley on all these gabblers!'

CHAPTER XVI.

The examination directed against those who were engaged in the terrible quarrel between the gavots and the devorants resulted in completely exculpating the first, and freeing them from all accusation. Pierre and Romanet, called as principal witnesses, distinguished themselves by their courage, their frankness, and their firmness. The fine face, the noble bearing, and the simple and select language of Pierre Huguenin, attracted the attention of the liberals of the city, who were present with their journalists at the sittings of the tribunal. But he was not the object of any fresh advances, for he departed as soon as he saw himself no longer necessary.

What did Father Huguenin do and think during his son's absence? The good man was vexed and angry; but, more than all, he was anxious. 'He is so exact and so ready in everything he undertakes!' said he to himself. 'Some misfortune must have happened to him!' And then he was distressed; for he had never perceived the love and esteem he felt for his son so much as since this last separation.

As Pierre had feared, his fever increased, and he had not been able to leave his bed on the day, when, luckily, Amaury and the Berrichon arrived. On the road, the Corinthian had renewed to his companion the request which Pierre had before made, to spare father Huguenin's prejudices respecting the companionship; and, as he felt a repugnance to begin his connexion with his new master by a lie, he desired the Berrichon to speak first. On leaping down from the diligence, they asked for the house of the joiner, and entered it, one with the ease of a blockhead, the other with the reserve of a man of sense.

'Holà! hé! hohé!' cried the Berrichon, knocking with his stick upon the open door. 'House ho! health, good-day the house! Does not father Huguenin, master-joiner, live here?'

At this moment father Huguenin was resting on his bed; he was in such bad humour, that he could not bear to have any one in his chamber. On seeing his solitude so rudely disturbed, he leaped up, and drawing back his curtain of yellow serge, he saw the strangely-jovial face of Berrichon la Clef-des-cœurs. 'Go your ways, friend,' replied he, roughly, 'the inn is further on.'

'And if we wish to take your house for our inn?' returned la Clef-des-cœurs, who, counting upon the pleasure which his

arrival would cause to the old joiner, thought it pleasant to jest a little before making himself known.

'In that case,' replied Father Huguenin, beginning to put on his vest, 'I will show you that if you enter a sick man's house without ceremony, you may go out with still less.'

'Excuse my comrade, master,' said Amaury, showing himself and saluting his friend's father with respect; 'we come to you from Pierre, your son, to offer you our services.'

'My son!' cried the master, 'where is my son, then?'

'At Blois, detained for two or three days yet by some business of which he will himself inform you; he has enlisted us, and here are two words from him to announce us.'

Father Huguenin, having read his son's billet, felt himself grow better and more calm. 'Well and good,' said he, 'your demeanour is good, my son, and your face pleases me; but your comrade has strange manners of his own. Look you, friend,' added he, measuring the Berrichon with a severe eye, 'are you more correct at your work than in the house? Your cap does not become you, my boy.'

'My cap?' said the Berrichon quite astonished, uncovering himself and examining his headpiece with simplicity. 'Zounds, it is not handsome, master, but one must wear what one has.'

'But one uncovers himself before a master with white hairs,' said the Corinthian, who had understood father Huguenin's thought.

'To be sure! I wasn't brought up in a college,' replied the Berrichon, putting his cap under his arm, 'but I work with good will—that is all I know how to do.'

'Well, we shall see that, my children,' said Father Huguenin, softening. 'You come in good time, for the work presses, and I am here on my bed like an old horse on the straw. You shall drink a glass of my wine, and then I will conduct you to the chateau; for, dead or alive, I must re-assure and satisfy my employer.'

The honest man, having called his maid-servant, tried to rise, while his companions did honour to the refreshment. But he suffered so much that Amaury perceived it, and requested him, with his usual gentleness, not to disturb himself. He assured him that, thanks to Pierre, he was as *au fait* to the work as if he had begun it himself; and, to prove it to him, he described the form and dimensions of the covings, of the pannels, of the cornices, of the string-boards, of the curves with double curvature, of the joining-caps, &c., &c., to a line, with so much memory and facility, that the old joiner again looked at him fixedly. Then, thinking of the advantage of a science which renders the most complicated operations so clear, and engraves them so well on the mind, he scratched

his ear, again put on his cotton cap, and resumed his bed, saying, 'God's will be done!'

'Trust to us,' replied Amaury. 'The desire to satisfy you will supply the want of your advice to-day; and, perhaps, to-morrow you will be able to come to our assistance. In the meanwhile take a good nap, and don't torment yourself.'

'No, no, don't torment yourself, my master,' cried la Clef-des-Cœurs, hastily swallowing a last glass of wine. 'You shall see that you were wrong in turning the cold shoulder on two pretty companions like us.'

'Companions,' murmered Father Huguenin, whose brow immediately grew dark.

'Ah! I said that to make you angry,' responded the Berrichon, laughing, 'because I know that you do not like the companions.'

'Ah! ah! you belong to the companionship?' growled father Huguenin, divided between his old spite and I know not what sudden sympathy.

'Yes, yes,' continued the Berrichon, who had at last wit enough to know how to jest about his ugliness; 'we are in the devoir of the handsome boys, and I am the ensign of that regiment.'

'We know but one devoir (duty) here,' said the Corinthian, playing upon the word, 'that of serving you well.'

'May God hear you!' replied Father Huguenin; and he covered himself, exhausted, with the bed-clothes.

Still he slept peacefully, and the next day, feeling better, he went to visit his journeymen. He found them working bravely, keeping the apprentices well along, and laying out the work as well as Pierre Huguenin himself. Re-assured respecting his undertaking, reconciled with M. Lerebours, who until then had looked sourly upon him, full of hope, he returned to his bed; and soon he was completely recovered to receive his son, who arrived three days after in the evening.

A celestial calmness was depicted upon the brow of Pierre Huguenin. His conscience bore him good witness, and his customary gravity was tempered by an inward satisfaction which communicated itself as if magnetically to his father. Questioned by the latter as to the cause of his delay, he replied:

'Allow me, my good father, not to enter upon a justification which would require time. When you desire it, I will inform you of what I have done at Blois: but now please send me at once to my comrades, and be satisfied with the word I give you. Yes, I can swear upon my honour that I have only accomplished a duty, and that you would have blessed and approved me, had your eye been upon me.'

'Well, you answer me as you choose,' said the old joiner;

'and there are moments when you persuade me that you are the father and I the son. It is singular, nevertheless, but so it is.'

He was so well on that day, that he could sup with his son, the two journeymen and the apprentices. He felt a predilection for Amaury, whose gentleness and respectful attention charmed him; and though he disliked to question him upon certain things, he said to himself aside. 'If that is one of those mad companions, at least it must be confessed that his face and words are very deceitful.' He also began to change respecting the Berrichon, and to recognise excellent qualities under that rough covering. His oddities made him laugh, and he was not displeased to have some one to scold and laugh at; for he had, as may have been seen, the teazing character of active people; and the habitual dignity of his son and of the Corinthian rather restrained him.

That evening, when the Berrichon had appeased his first hunger which was always impetuous, he opened the conversation, with his mouth full and his elbow on the table.

'Comrade,' said he to the Corinthian, 'why don't you want me to tell master Pierre what took place respecting him with that great booby of a Polydore, Theodore, I don't know what you call him—the steward's boy.'

Amaury, dissatisfied with this indiscretion, shrugged his shoulders and did not answer. But father Huguenin was not disposed to let the Berrichon's chat fall unheeded.

'My dear Amaury,' said he, 'I advise you not to have any secrets in common with that youth. He is as fine and light as a large beam which should fall on your toes.'

'Come,' said Pierre Huguenin, 'since he has begun, we must let him finish. I see that he refers to M. Isidore Lerebours. How can you imagine, Amaury, that I care for what he may have said against me! I must be very weak minded to fear his judgment.'

'Ah! well; in that case I will tell you: yes, I will tell you, master Pierre!' cried the Berrichon, winking at Amaury, as if to beg him not to close his mouth.

The Corinthian made a sign that he could speak, and he began his recital in these terms:

'In the first place, there was a beautiful lady, a superb woman, faith, quite small and rosy cheeked, who passed and repassed, and again passed, and again repassed, as if to look at our work; but, as true as I bite my bread, it was to look at the pays Corinthian—'

'What does he mean with his pays and his Corinthian?' asked father Huguenin, before whom they had agreed never to use their companionship names.

Pierre trod rather heavily upon the foot of the Berrichon, who made a horrible face and resumed at once:

'When I say the pays, it is as if I said the friend, the comrade, we are pays, he and I: he is from Nantes in Brittany, and I am from Nohant-vic in Berry.'

'Very well,' said father Huguenin, holding his sides with laughter.

'And when I say the Corinthian,' pursued the Berrichon, whose foot was still trod upon, 'it is a name which I amuse myself in giving him—'

'In fine that lady looked at Amaury?' said father Huguenin.

'What lady?' asked Pierre, who, without knowing why, began to listen with attention.

'A great, beautiful lady, quite small, as he has told you, replied Amaury laughing; 'but I do not know her.'

'If she is rosy-cheeked,' objected father Huguenin, 'it is not Mademoiselle de Villepreux, for she is pale as a corpse. Perhaps it was her chamber-maid?'

'Ah! perhaps it was,' replied the Berrichon, 'for they called her madam.'

'Then she was not alone in looking at you?' asked Pierre.

'Quite alone,' replied Clef-des-cœurs; 'but M. Colidor, who was with her—'

'Isadore!' interrupted father Huguenin in a loud voice to disconcert him.

'Yes, Theodore,' continued the Berrichon, who had his malice as well as another. 'Well! that M. Molitor said to her something like this: "Is there anything for your service, madam marchioness?"'

'Ah! then it was the niece, the little lady des Frenays,' observed father Huguenin. 'She is not proud and looks at everybody—did she look at Amaury, really?'

'As I look at you!' cried the Berrichon.

'Oh no! not exactly!' replied the old joiner, laughing at the Berrichon's ugly stare. 'And at last she spoke to you?'

'No no! she only said: "I am looking for the little dog; haven't you seen him about here, gentlemen joiners?" And she looked at the pays—the comrade Amaury; zounds! she looked at him as if she wanted to eat him with her eyes!'

'Pooh! stupid! it was you she looked at!' said Amaury. 'You may as well confess that: it isn't your fault that you are handsome.'

'Oh! as to that, you are laughing at me,' replied the Berrichon. 'Never did any kind of woman look at me, rich or poor, young or old, except the mother—I mean the Savinienne, before she was in tears for her dead husband.'

'She looked at you?' cried Amaury, blushing.

'Yes, in pity,' replied the Berrichon, who was not wanting in good sense as regarded personal matters: 'and she often said to me: "My poor Berrichon, you have such an odd nose and such an odd mouth! was it your father or your mother who had that nose and that mouth?"'

'Well, the story of the lady?' replied Father Huguenin.

'The story is finished,' replied the Berrichon. 'She went out as she came in, and M. Hyppolyte—'

'M. Isidore!' interrupted the obstinate father Huguenin.

'As you please,' returned the Berrichon. 'His name is no handsomer than my nose. *And so*, he placed himself beside us with arms folded like the emperor Napoleon holding his spy-glass; and then he began to say that we were making poor work, miserable work, what! And then suddenly the pays—the comrade Amaury did not answer him, and then, at once, I—I continued sawing my boards without saying anything.—That was what vexed him, the gentleman! Doubtless he would have wished us to ask him why the work did not please him. Then he took up a piece and said it was bad stock, that the wood was already cracked, and that, if that should fall, that would break like a glass. And then the Corinthian (excuse me, our master, it is a *customary* I have to call him like that), the Corinthian, that I say, answered him: "Try it, then, citizen, if your heart tells you so." And then, he threw the piece to the ground with all his strength; and then, it happened that it did not break, without which I should have broken his head with my hammer.'

'Is that all?' asked Pierre Huguenin.

'I, I consider it too much,' said father Huguenin, who had become thoughtful. 'You see, Pierre, I told you so; Lerebours's son wishes you ill, and will do you an injury.'

'We shall see,' replied Pierre.

In fact, Isidore Lerebours, having learned in what manner Pierre Huguenin had criticised and remodelled his plan for the staircase, nourished a deep spite against him. The day before, he had dined at the chateau, at the table of Count de Villepreux; for it was Sunday, and on that day the count invited M Lerebours and his son, with the curate, the mayor, and the schoolmaster. The count's system was, that there are always in a village four or five individuals over whom it is necessary to obtain an influence, and who are more bound by the politeness of a good dinner than by justice and good reasons. M. Isidore was very vain of this privilege. He carried to the chateau the splendour of his most ridiculous toilettes, broke each time more or less goblets and glasses, smelt of the best wines with the air of a connoisseur, always received from the master some good lesson by which he did not know how

to profit, and permitted himself to stare quite impudently at the pretty marchioness des Frenays.

This first Sunday presented itself quite apropos to satisfy Isidore's vengeance. Naturally, while the count played, after dinner, his hundred points of piquet with the curate, the conversation turned upon the repairs of the chapel, and the old count asked his steward if they had been resumed.

'Yes, sir count,' replied M. Lerebours. 'Four mechanics are on the job, even to-day.'

'In spite of its being Sunday?' observed the curate.

'You will give them absolution, curate,' said the count.

'I fear, then,' said Isidore, who waited impatiently for the moment to put in his word, 'that sir count will by no means be satisfied with the work they do. They use wood which is not dry enough, and don't understand their business. Old Huguenin is not unskilful, but he is wounded. His son is a downright blockhead, a village lawyer, an ass, in one word.'

'Let the asses alone, then,' said the count, quietly shuffling his cards; 'we are not thinking of them.'

'Would sir count permit me to say that that stupid fellow is not fit for the work which has been entrusted to him. He is at best good only to split logs.'

'In that case you would not be safe,' replied the count, who, in his way, was as much of a joker as the elder Huguenin. 'But who, then, selected that workman? was it not your father?'

M. Lerebours was at the other end of the apartment, lost in flattering exclamations respecting the tapestry which Madame des Frenays was embroidering, and not hearing his son's insinuations against Pierre Huguenin.

'My father has been deceived about that man,' replied Isidore, in a low voice. 'He had heard him praised. He thought he was doing well in paying him less than a man of talent who could have been brought from elsewhere. But it is an error; for all that has been done, and all they are allowed to do, will have to be begun again. I wish I may lose my name if it does not turn out as I say.'

'Lose your name!' retorted the count, still playing his cards, and openly ridiculing him without his being willing to perceive it; 'that would be a great loss. If I had the good fortune to be called Isidore Lerebours, I would not take such a risk.'

The Marchioness des Frenays, whom M. Lerebours greatly wearied with his compliments, took part in the conversation with a sweet and flute-like voice.

'You are very severe, M. Isidore!' said she, in her childish and coquettish style. 'I passed through the library by chance, and thought the new wainscotting quite as pretty and well-

executed as the old. How beautiful that wainscotting is! You were very right to have it repaired, uncle; it will be in perfect taste, and completely in fashion.'

'In fashion?' cried Isidore, judiciously; 'it is more than three hundred years since it was made.'

'Did you find that out alone?' said the count.

'But it seems to me—' returned Isidore.

'It is the fashion now!' rather angrily interrupted the curate, whom Isidore's chat distracted. 'All the old fashions return. But do let us play, M. Isidore.'

M. Lerebours darted a terrible glance at his son, who, satisfied with having struck the first blow at Pierre Huguenin, approached the ladies. Mademoiselle Yseult had such an invincible repugnance to him, that she rose and changed her place. Madame des Frenays, less delicate in her nerves, did not refuse to enter into conversation with the employé aux ponts-et-chaussées. She questioned him about the library, and about that Pierre Huguenin of whom he spoke so ill; at last she asked him which among the workmen whom she had seen that morning, as she crossed the workshop, was Pierre Huguenin. 'There was one who seemed to me to have a very remarkable face,' said she, with great ingenuousness.

'Pierre Huguenin was not there,' replied Isidore; and the one to whom you refer is a journeyman. I don't know his name, but he has an odd surname.'

'Ah! really? Tell me, then, it will amuse me.'

'His comrade calls him the Corinthian.'

'The Corinthian! Oh! how pretty that is. But why? What does that mean?'

'Those people make all sorts of nicknames. The other is called la Clef des-cœurs.'

'Oh! what a good joke! But that is because he is so horrible! I have never seen any one so ugly!'

Any other than Isidore would have remarked that, for a marchioness, Madame des Frenays had looked rather too much at the workmen in the library, and that she by no means at this moment justified the saying of Labruyère: 'Only to nuns is a gardener a man.' But Isodore, who knew that the marchioness was rather coquettish, and thought himself very agreeable, limited himself to thinking that she said nothings, and that she pretended to take an interest in them, in order to retain him by her side and enjoy his conversation.

The Marchioness des Frenays, born Josephine Clicot, and daughter of a provincial woollen manufacturer, had been married very young to the Marquis des Frenays, M. de Villepreux's nephew. This marquis was a very good gentleman of Touraine, so far as a noble; but a very sad personage as an

individual. He had served under the empire; but, as he had small talent and no good conduct, he had never left the secondary grades, where he had quite grossly consumed his patrimony. In the hundred days, he had not known how to take either a skilful or a courageous part; that is, he had betrayed the fortunes of the emperor too late, and had not known how to secure either the profit of desertion or the merit of fidelity. He had then fallen back upon the count de Villepreux, who, finding his society rather troublesome, and his debts rather frequent, had thought to rid himself of them, to the advantage of the Clicot family, by getting him to marry the rich heiress Josephine. The Clicots knew very well beforehand that the marquis was neither handsome, nor young, nor amiable; that his morals were as much disordered as his fortune; in a word, that his wife would have no chance of happiness, nor of real consideration; but an alliance with *the family*, as M. Lerebours said very well, had turned their heads, and the little Clicot was consoled for everything by the title of marchioness.

A few years were enough to disenchant her; the marquis soon consumed his wife's dowry in a frivolous manner. The Clicots, wishing to save to the latter some resources for the future, offered an amicable separation, settled a pension of six thousand frances on the husband, on condition that he should live in Paris, or abroad, and took back their daughter. The mother Clicot having died during this arrangement, the father had again engaged in business, in order to repair the breach made in his fortune: and Josephine went to live with him and two old aunts, in a large very ordinary country-house, adjoining the manufactory, on the banks of the Loiret, some leagues from Villepreux.

In the midst of the uninteresting and inelegant noise and movement of industrial life, surrounded by very prosaic people, and condemned to an austere existence (for her relatives kept her as strictly as if she was still a little girl), poor Josephine became mortally ennuyéed. She had rapidly seen a corner of the great world, and had there acquired an immoderate thirst for elegant life and frivolous excitement. During one or two years, she had had at Paris a carriage, beautiful apartments, a box at the opera, an encirclement of fops, of marchandes de modes, of sempstresses and perfumers. Banished suddenly to a smoky and bad-smelling factory, surrounded by workmen or superintendents, of better intentions than manners, hearing only of wools, trades, wages, dyes, prices current, and stocks, she had no other resource against despair but to read novels in the evening, and sleep a part of the day, while her beautiful dresses, her plumes and laces, last remains of an extinct luxury, grew yellow in their boxes,

vainly awaiting an opportunity to see the light again. Josephine had received a miserable education. Her mother was ignorant and vain of her money; her father had no other care or business but to amass money: their daughter had no other desire or faculty but to spend money. She was fit for nothing when she no longer had ornaments to arrange, or a party of pleasure to project. She was twenty at most, and perfectly pretty, but of that beauty which speaks rather to the eye than the mind. No longer knowing, therefore, what to do with her youth, her beauty, and her trinkets, her imagination, vivid and charming as her face and nature, had taken its flight in the world of romances. In her solitude she created for herself wonderful adventures and conquests; but compelled to fall back into reality, she was only the more to be pitied. The melancholy which had seized upon her suggested to her aunts the dangerous precaution of confining her as much as possible; and Josephine's poor head, shut up in the industrial chauldron, threatened to burst, when an unexpected event changed her lot.

The father Clicot fell dangerously ill, and, touched by the tender cares bestowed on him by his daughter, wounded at the same time by the sordid views betrayed by his sisters, he conspired against the latter on leaving them. He secured to them a competency; but he abolished their authority by calling to his death-bed the count de Villepreux, and placing Josephine and her property under his protection. The count indeed felt that, having caused the poor young woman's unhappiness by uniting her to his scamp of a nephew, he had heavy wrongs to repair with regard to her. He understood his duty, and, having assisted her to close her father's eyes, he declared himself her substituted guardian until she should attain her majority, which was not far off. He caused the will to be executed, assembled the family council, expelled the old aunts from the manufactory, according to the desire of the deceased, intrusted its management to a skilful and honest superintendent; then he took the marchioness into his own family, and treated her with paternal affection, the first act of which was to notify the marquis des Frenays that he should cause the separation agreed upon to be respected, and, in case of need, would protect his wife against him.

This praiseworthy conduct excited against M. de Villepreux that branch of the family to which the marquis des Frenays belonged. That branch was ultra-royalist, ruined, jealous, and accused the old count with being rapacious, avaricious, and a jacobin.

Josephine, rescued from all her persecutors and all her tyrants at last began to breathe. At first the sweet and cordial intimacy of her uncle, the delicate friendship of Yseult,

the benevolent tranquillity of their manners and customs, seemed to her paradise after hell. But that excited brain would have required rather more movement, either in dissipation or in adventures, than was presented by the peaceful and orderly life of the old count. Yseult also was rather a serious companion for the romantic Josephine. Already accustomed to isolate herself from those about her, and to construct a world of chimeras in the secret of her thoughts, she pretended, therefore, to be in unison with the family, and resumed the customary course of her sentimental reveries without communicating them to any one.

CHAPTER XVII.

Courage had returned to the heart of Pierre Huguenin. The chapel appeared to him more beautiful than when he first entered it. The recovery of his father, the sweet society and precious assistance of his dear Corinthian, added to his happiness. He took his chisel, and with a fresh and clear voice sang the song upon the joiner's art.

Notre art a puise sa richesse
Dans les temples de l' Eternel.
Il a pris son droit de noblesse
En posant son sceau sur l'autel.*

Then before striking the first blow with his chisel, he embraced his father, clasped the Corinthian's hand, and applied himself to work with ardour. The Berrichon shook his head.

'And for me nothing at all,' said he with a sad good-natured manner.

'For you also the heart and the hand,' said Pierre, pressing his horny palm.

The Berrichon, recovering his joy, made a cross with his chisel upon the wood he was about to cut, according to the ancient Christian custom of his country, and began to sing in his turn a song of Angevine le Sagesse, one of the brave poets of the tour of France. Father Huguenin, his arm in a scarf,

* Our art has acquired its riches
In the temples of the Eternal.
It has taken its noble birthright
By placing its seal upon the altar.†

† The square, symbol of labour, which is also the emblem of the symbolic altriangle of the divine Trinity.

followed them with smiling eyes. At this moment the count de Villepreux, entered, accompanied by his grand-daughter, the marchioness des Frenays and M. Lerebours.

The count, suffering with the gout, supported his steps on one side by a crutch-cane, on the other by the arm of Yseult, who faithfully accompanied him in all his landlord's walks. M. Lerebours had taken the risk of offering his arm to Josephine, who had accepted it with a graceful resignation. The count stopped at the entrance of the library to listen with curiosity to the Berrichon's song:

Away with melancholy
Nor doleful changes ring;
For us the past is nothing now
The future naught can bring.

'The rhyme is not rich,' said the count to his daughter, 'but the idea says much.'

They approached without being seen. The noise of the saw and the plane covered that of their steps and voices.

'Which of all those is Pierre Huguenin?' asked the marchioness of the steward.

'The tallest and strongest of them all,' replied M. Lerebours.

The marchioness looked alternately from the Corinthian to l'Ami-du-trait, not knowing which was the handsomer, he who resembled an antique huntsman with his manly air and elegant strength, or the other who recalled young Raphael with his pensive grace, his paleness, and his long hair.

The old count, who had the taste and the feeling of the beautiful, was also struck by that noble trio of Greek heads, which was completed by the father Huguenin, with his broad forehead, his silvery locks, the marked lines of his profile, and his eye full of fire.

'They say the people are not handsome in France,' said he to his grand-daughter, extending his crutch as if to make her notice a picture, 'yet those are specimens of a noble race.'

The elder Huguenin, who was not working, approached the noble visitors with a frank politeness. The aspect of the count was truly venerable, and whoever saw him was compelled to abjure in his presence every democratic prejudice. The count saluted him by taking off his cap entirely and bowing very low, as if he were saluting a duke and peer. He had not followed the manner of those insolent roues of the regency, who, by becoming familiar with the populace, had made it familiar with them; he had received and retained the healthy traditions of the great lords of Louis XIV., who, by an admirable politeness, consecrated *in petto* the in-

feriority of the people. The old count introduced a new feeling into this civility long since acquired; he had recollections of the revolution which made him accept, half-ironically, half frankly, the principle of equality! he himself said that, every time he met a man of the people, he murmured aside this formula: 'Sovereign people, you wish to be saluted.'

He first inquired respecting the old joiner's wound, and obligingly said that he was very sorry he had met with that accident while working for him.

'The fact was, I was going rather to fast,' replied the elder Huguenin; 'one should not be harebrained at my age; but M. Lerebours hurried me so much that, to satisfy M. the count, I struck furious blows upon the wood; and I found that my chisel was sharp when it cut into my old skin, which is almost as hard as old oak.'

'Then you make me out very wicked, M. Lerebours,' said the count, turning towards his intendant. 'And yet I have never maimed any one as I remember.'

Pierre Huguenin, motionless, with head uncovered and swelling chest, looked upon Mademoiselle Villepreux with an indefinable emotion. He had remembered, simply on hearing her mentioned, his watchings in her study, and the species of worship he had paid to the unknown divinity of that sanctuary. He was troubled in her presence, as if a mysterious bond was to be strengthened or broken at this first interview. He was at first astonished not to find her so beautiful as he had created her. She was, in fact, more *distinguee* than pretty. Her features were fine, her brow pure and well designed, her head elegant and of a beautiful oval; but there was nothing great or striking in her person. She absolutely wanted brilliancy. Still, on looking at her carefully, one could see that she disdained to show it; for her small black eye could be animated, her mouth smile, and all her frail person unveil the hidden grace that was in her. But it was as if she had determined to despise the labour of attraction. She was always dressed accordingly; her dresses were dark and without any ornament, and her hair divided in smooth bands upon her forehead. With this stillness of aspect and intention, she had a very penetrating charm for whomsoever knew how to understand her; but this was impossible at first sight, and at all times quite difficult.

Pierre Huguenin examined her; but suddenly he met her glance. That glance was almost bold, so indifferent and calm was it. Pierre blushed, turned aside his eyes and felt a weight of ice fall on his imagination: not that he found the heroine of the turret disagreeable or repulsive, but this strange gravity in so young a girl destroyed all his notions and de-

ranged all his dreams. He did not know if he ought to consider her as a sick child, or as an organization for ever struck with apathy and languor. And then he said to himself that he should never know her better, that perhaps he should have no opportunity to exchange a second glance with her; and he felt sad, as if he had lost the protection of some ideal power on which he had depended without knowing it.

In the meanwhile the count had approached the work. He examined attentively all its parts:

'This is perfectly well executed,' said, he, 'and I cannot help praising you; but are you very sure, messieurs, of the quality of your wood?'

'Certainly it is not so good,' replied Pierre, 'as that of the old wainscotting. In two hundred years it will be good, and the old will perhaps be no longer so. But I can guarantee that mine will not warp so as to injure the effect. If a board contracts, if a panel splits, which is not probable, I will repair it at my own expense and before the eye can have been shocked by it.

'But if you should be deceived entirely as to the quality of the stock?' said the count; 'if the whole work had to be renewed?'

'I would renew it at my own cost, and would engage to furnish better wood,' replied Pierre.

'In that case,' said the count, turning to his daughter as if to take her to witness, 'I believe that we must have confidence and trust in the conscience and talent of these people. Certainly, you work very well, messieurs, and I should not have thought that the ancient models could have been reproduced so faithfully.'

'There is but small merit in that,' replied Pierre; 'it is only the labour of an attentive and docile mechanic. But he who designed the model was an artist. He had the taste, the invention, the feeling, now lost, of elegant and simple proportion.'

The count's eyes sparkled, and he struck lightly on the ground with his cane, which was in him an indication of surprise and inward satisfaction. Father Hughenin knew this well and he remarked it.

'But it is being an artist to understand and express it as you do!' said the count.

'We all take that title,' replied Pierre, 'but we do not deserve it. Still,' added he, pointing at Amaury, 'there is an artist. He practices joinery as it now is, because he must earn his livelihood; but he could invent as beautiful things as there are here. If there were in the chateau any apartment to be decorated, you might consult the designs he has

made in leisure moments for his amusement, and would there find models which connoisseurs could not criticise.'

Really?' said the count looking at Amaury, who, by no means expecting this discovery, blushed to the white of his eyes. 'Is he your brother?'

'No, M. the count; but he is just the same,' replied Pierre.

'Well, we will profit by his talents, and by your's also, sir. Delighted to know you! I am your servant.'

And the count having saluted him with politeness, and even with a certain deference, withdrew, wondering in a low tone, with his grand daughter, at the good sense and modesty of Pierre Huguenin's replies.

The first person they met on leaving the library was Isidore, who, having watched for the moment, there awaited the effect which his accusation might have produced. He did not know that the old count, having the instinct and the taste of what the phrenologists now-a-days call *constructiveness*, understood much better than he how to judge of the labours of a workshop, and that it was not easy to lead him into an error. He had depended upon the rough vivacity which he knew he had, and upon the rather irrascible pride of Father Huguenin. He had hoped that the one would express a doubt, and that the other would reply without respect or moderation. The count, who had that morning caused his architect to relate to him the adventure of the staircase plan, now understood very well Isidore's conduct and perfectly despised it.

'I am very well satisfied with what I have just seen,' said he to him, raising his voice and looking him directly in the face with a severe air; 'those are good workmen, and I thank your father much for having employed them. Who was it then that said, last evening, that they were poor workmen? Was it my architect? Was, it not you, Isidore?'

'I do not think the architect could have said that,' replied M. Lerebours; 'for he is well pleased with the work of the Huguenins.'

'Then it must have been he!' said the count, maliciously pointing at Isidore.

'My son has not seen what they are doing; besides, he understands nothing about it. The sciences he has studied are of a higher order, and the proverb which says: "He who can do the greater can do the less," is not always true. But who can have sought to prejudice the count against *my* workmen? It must have been the curate; he feels sore with me because I beat him at billiards.'

'It must have been the curate,' replied the count, 'he is a

meddler. The first time we see him, we will tell him to mind his own business.'

Isidore did not take the lesson. He thought that the count remembered badly, and promised himself that he would profit by it to return to the charge. He was of that race of people who cannot be convicted of error in their own eyes; consequently, he was persuaded that his plan of the staircase was good and that Pierre's was faulty. He was naively astonished at the partiality which the architect had shown in his decision, and he awaited his adversary at the work to humiliate him. In vain had the prudent author of his days advised him not to boast of a defeat which would be forgotten or passed over in silence; Isidore pretended to take his advice, but he none the less cherished the project of revenging himself!

That evening, in the middle of the Huguenins' supper a domestic of the cheateau came to request Pierre to visit the count. This message was transmitted with a politeness which struck father Lacrête, present at the supper.

'Never have I seen these lackeys so honest,' said he in a low voice to his gossip.

'I assure you that my son has something singular about him,' replied father Huguenin in the same tone. 'He commands the respect of everybody.'

Pierre had gone up to his chamber. He came down again dressed and combed as if it were Sunday. His father had an inclination to joke with him; he did not dare to.

'Excuse!' said the Berrichon, as soon as Pierre had left to go to the chateau. 'He has made himself brave, our young master! If he goes on in that way, take care of yourself, pays Corinthian! the little baroness will not look at you any more.'

'You have joked enough upon that subject,' said father Huguenin in a severe tone. 'Idle talk always does harm, and such as that might injure my son. If you do not like it, my Amaury, you will not allow it to continue.'

'Idle words displease me as much as they do you, my master,' replied the Corinthian. 'So, Berrichon, we will say no more of that, will we, friend?'

'Enough said,' returned la Clef-de-cœurs. 'My business, for me, is to make people laugh. When they will laugh no longer——'

'We know that you have wit, my boy,' said father Huguenin. 'You will make us laugh about something else.'

'No matter,' said the Berrichon, 'those people of the chateau please me. They're not at all proud, they're genteel like everything, those noble ladies!'

When Pierre saw open before him the door of M. de Villepreux's study, he felt seized by a horrible uneasiness. He had

never conversed with persons placed so high in social life. The citizens with whom he had business had never intimidated him; he had always felt himself their equal, even in manners. But he said to himself that there was, doubtless, in the old lord, some other superiority besides that of rank. He knew that the count would be perfectly polite, but according to a code of etiquette to which he should be obliged to submit, even if he did not find it conformable to his ideas. This code is so strange, that a man of the people, who should assume the manners of a man of the world, would be considered impertinent. A workman, for example, must not bow too low; this would be demanding a similar salute, and he has no right to do so. Pierre had read novels and comedies enough to know what were the forms of politeness in that world which he had not seen. But what would be those forms with him, and how ought he to reply to them? As an equal? That would make him pass for a fool. As an inferior? That would be humiliating himself. This rather puerile anxiety would not perhaps have been felt by him, had he not distinguished by the light of the lamp, which feebly illumined the study, mademoiselle de Villepreux writing under her father's dictation. And all these reflections coming upon him at once, oppressed his heart, without his knowing how, and without my being very able to tell you why. When he entered, Yseult rose. Was it to salute him, or to make room for him? Pierre bowed, without daring to look at her.

'Please to take a seat, sir,' said the count to him, pointing to a chair.

Pierre was confused, and took a chair covered with books and papers. Yseult came to his assistance, by placing another near the table, and she withdrew a little. He did not know where she seated herself, so much did he fear meeting her eyes.

'I ask your pardon for making you come,' said the count; 'but I am too old and too gouty to go anywhere myself. I saw this morning, that the repairs of the wainscotting go on very fast, and should like to know if you think you could undertake to add to it the sculptured ornaments.'

'That is not in my line,' replied Pierre; 'but with the assistance of my companion, whom I have seen execute very delicate and very difficult ornaments, I think I could copy faithfully those in question.'

'So you would be willing to undertake them?' said the count. "My first intention was to have some carvers in wood come for that purpose; but after what you told me this morning, and what I have seen of your work, the idea has come to me of entrusting to you the sculpture likewise. This is why I wished to see you alone, in order not to wound your

companion, in case, in your conscience, you should consider the work beyond his power.'

'I believe that you will be satisfied with him, M. the count. But I must tell you beforehand, that the work will take a long time, for none of our apprentices can aid us.'

'Well, you will take the necessary time. Can you promise me that you will not allow yourself to be interrupted by other work than that of my house?'

'I can, M. the count. But a scruple retains me. Allow me to ask if you had cast your eyes upon any carver, in order to entrust this work to him?'

'Upon no one. I intended requesting my architect at Paris to send me such as he judged fit. But may I ask you, in my turn, why you put that question to me?'

'Because it is contrary to the practice of our trade, and I think, to delicacy in general, to undertake a job which is out of our usual line, when we find ourselves in competition with those to whom it exclusively belongs. This would be encroaching upon the rights of others, and depriving workmen of a profit which naturally falls to them rather than to us.'

'The scruple is an honest one,' and does not astonish me in you,' replied the count. 'But you may be satisfied that I had spoken to no one, and besides, my will ought to have free action in this respect. My expenses would be much increased by bringing in workmen who do not belong to the province. Let this be a reason for you, if you require one. For myself I have another: it is the pleasure of entrusting to you a work which must gratify you, and of which you feel the beauty so sensibly.'

'Still I will not begin,' replied Pierre, 'before submitting to you a specimen of our skill, in order that you may change your determination if we do not succeed well.'

'Could you bring it to me in a few days?'

'I think so, M. the count.'

'And I,' said mademoiselle de Villepreux, 'might I make a request of you, M. Pierre?'

Pierre started in his chair on hearing that voice address him. He had thought that if such a thing could happen, it would be under the influence of strange and romantic circumstances. That which is entirely natural never satisfies an excited imagination. He bowed without being able to say a word.

'That would be,' resumed Yseult, 'to replace the door of my study, which M. Lerebours has already asked you for several times, and which has been lost, as he pretends. You will do me a great pleasure by having it sought for and replaced, in whatever condition it may be.'

'Apropos, that is true!' said the count. 'She loves her study, and can no longer sit there.'

'It shall be done to morrow,' replied Pierre.

And he retired entirely overpowered, quite terrified at the sadness which again seized upon him.

'I am a fool,' said he to himself, as he resumed the road to his home. 'That door shall be replaced to-morrow: it must be so; it must be closed for ever between *her* and me.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Pierre, who, at home, as while travelling, shared his bed with Amaury, after the manner of ancient brothers-in-arms, related to his friend the proposition which the count had made to him, a vivid feeling of hope and joy took possession of the young artist. He had always felt that the delicate skill of his hand and the exquisite taste of his ideas led him towards sculpture; but, having begun the trade of a joiner, and being affiliated to a companionship of that profession, he had feared to retard himself in his career by entering upon a new path. Encouragement had been wanting. Pierre was the only one who advised him to go to Paris and obtain instruction in his favourite art. But at that period the Corinthian was kept at Blois by his love for the Savinienne. He had, therefore, given up his dream, and had brought down his pretensions to the ornaments which belong to joinery in building. By the acknowledgments of all the companions, he excelled in the difficult part of ornamented caps to niches, and no one could cut like him the light leaves of a Greek capital. It was especially on this account that they had conferred on him the elegant surname he bore.

'Ah! my friend,' cried he, 'fate is good to send this diversion to my sorrow! I have not had the strength to tell you my admiration for that beautiful wainscotting, and the effect it produced on me the first time I saw it. At first, I admired very much that beautiful distribution and that wisdom of plan of which you spoke to me at Blois. I remarked the character of breadth which is felt in the details of the smallest dimension. Yes, I understood what you formerly explained to me, that grandeur is not in extent, but in proportion; and that one may make meanly a colossus of architecture, while an appearance of height and strength can be given to a model of a few inches. But I confess to you, that on looking at those arabesques distributed with so much rich-

ness and moderation at the same time (for this is still the same question: small means, great effect), when I saw those medallions encrusted in the pannels, and displaying, as from a window, those beautiful little heads of saints, with their varying expression and dresses; some grave like old philosophers—others laughing and mocking like waggish monks; here a proud soldier with his casque crushed over his eyes, there a pretty female saint crowned with flowers and pearls; below, a beautiful seraph with curling and flowing hair; elsewhere, an old half-veiled sybil, extending her thin and angular neck: and around all this, birds playing among the garlands of flowers, infernal monsters pursuing lost souls through a netting of ivy leaves, and those great heads of lions which seem to growl at all the angels, and all those bas-reliefs, all those figurantes, all those festoons, and all that movement of different beings who seem to live, run, fly, dance, sing, or meditate, upon the inanimate wood—Oh! at the sight of all these wonders of a time when art ennobled handiwork, I felt myself transported into another world, and big tears were ready to flow from my eyes. Happy, thrice happy, thought I, the workman who could at his will animate these shreds of his own life, and bring forth, from the rough sides of the oak, the cherished people of his dreams! And, as the shades of evening began to fall, I fancied that I saw move around me legions of little phantoms, who went climbing upon the pannels, hanging upon the cornices, and contending with the ancient creations of the artist. The archangels blowed their trumpets; the capital sins, fantastic monsters, foraged in the spiry acanthus; and the beautiful Christian virgins played among the quiet lilies, while the prevaricating monks, wine-bibbing satyrs, pulled the beards of the grave theologians. I was intoxicated myself,—I was mad. The more I tried to recover my senses, the more my vision increased and became animated around my burning temples. It seemed to me that all those demons, all those imps, issued from my head, from my hands, from my pockets. I was about to run after them, trying to catch them, to put them in order, to encrust them in the wood, respectful and mute in the empty places and in the abandoned niches which time had hollowed for them by the side of their ancestors, when the Berrichon's voice tore me from my hallucination. He drew me away, putting upon my shoulder my saw and my plane, coarse tools of a still coarser labour. I resigned myself; I worked according to my duty, not according to my vocation. And now you see, Pierre, that dream was as a prophetic foreshadowing of my happy destiny. Now I shall be able to say in my turn: "And I also am an artist!" I shall make sculptures, I shall create beings,

I shall give life! and my imagination, which made me suffer, will give me joy and power!'

The Corinthian's delirium caused his friend some surprise. Pierre did not know all the exultation of that young head, which had read many books, and cherished many golden dreams in its travels. He had embraced him with an admiration mingled with tenderness, and requested him to become calm in order that he might take some rest. But the Corinthian could not sleep, and he rose before daylight. He did not think of breakfasting: and when his friend reached the workshop, he found him busy carving a figure.

'I have begun with the most difficult,' said he, 'because I am not anxious about the rest. But will this head succeed? I know very well that it will not resemble the model exactly. But provided it has truth, expression, and grace, it will be worthy to remain. What I admire in this wainscotting, is that there are no two ornaments or two figures alike. It is infinite variety and caprice in harmony and regularity. Oh! my friend, may I be able to find beauty, I also! May I be able to bring to light what I have in my soul, and produce what I feel!'

'But where have you learnt the art of design?' asked Pierre, astonished at seeing a human head come from under the Corinthian's chisel.

'Nowhere and everywhere,' replied the young man. 'I have always been impelled by an irresistible instinct towards statues and bas-reliefs. I have never passed before a monument without stopping for a long time to look at all the ornaments and all the sculptures. But it is in the museums of great cities that I have hidden long contemplations, and tasted delights of which I have never dared to speak to any one. We all go to see those collections, as we go to see sights of new strange things. We obtain there some notions of history, of mythology and allegory; but the greater part of us go to satisfy a curiosity without object, and I can say that I went to satisfy a passion. I have even made some drawings from the models. At Arles, I tried to copy the antique Venus; and I took the outlines of some vases and sarcophaguses, which I dreamt of executing in wood and placing as ornaments in some parts of the decoration. But could I know what I did? And do I now know what I have done? Gross caricatures, perhaps. I have calculated the proportions geometrically; but grace, delicacy, movement—beauty, in one word!—who will tell me if my hand obeyed my thought? Who will prove to me that my eyes did not deceive me when they thought they again found upon the paper what they had discovered and observed in the stone and marble? I move in a chaos, in nothingness, perhaps! I have seen children draw

upon a wall grotesque, impossible faces, which they thought conformable to the laws of nature: they deceived themselves, and were satisfied with their work. But I have seen other children trace naturally, and as if obeying a mysterious faculty, faces which were animated, attitudes which were true, bodies which were well balanced, well proportioned. They did not know that they had done better than the others! And I, in what class must I range myself? I do not know. Could you not tell me, oh! my poor Pierre?'

Talking thus, the Corinthian worked with ardour; his eyes were brilliant and moist, his brow was bathed in sweat. He felt a delicious and terrible anguish in the depths of his soul. Pierre shared it. When the figure was finished, Amaury, seeing father Huguenin and the apprentices coming, wiped his forehead, and hid in a corner his work and the tools he had used. He feared the judgment of ignorance, and being discouraged by some raillery. He did not even wish to examine in secret what he had done, for fear of perceiving his want of power, and losing too soon his hope full of delight. When the workmen left at noon for their luncheon, he did not follow them, but asked Pierre Huguenin to go and get for him a piece of bread. But when the latter brought it, he did not even think of touching it.

'Pierre!' cried he, 'I think I have succeeded; but I fear to show you what I have done. If you condemn it, do not tell me yet, I beg of you. Let me flatter myself until the evening.'

The hour of supper having come, he wrapped the little figure up in his handkerchief, and giving it to Pierre: 'Take it,' said he, 'and wait till you are alone before looking at. If you find it bad, break it, and do not speak to me about it again."

'I will take good care not to do that,' replied Pierre; 'I cannot judge of the merit of such a thing! but I know some one who must understand the matter, and I will tell you in an hour if you ought to go on or stop. Go wait for me at the house, and take some supper, for you have eaten nothing all day.'

Pierre did not think of dressing himself in his fine clothes. He did not even remember the embarrassment he had experienced the evening before, on appearing in the presence of the count and his daughter; he thought only of his friend's anxiety, and he asked to speak to M. de Villepreux. He was admitted, as before, into the study. Yseult was not there. Pierre entered without fear.

'This,' said he, 'is what my friend has attempted. It seems to me good; but I do not understand the matter sufficiently to decide.'

'What! a-head!' cried the count. 'But I did not ask for that; or, rather, I did not expect,' added he, looking at the figure with astonishment.

'Is not this a part of the ornaments which M. the count intended to intrust to us?'

'By my faith! I did not even think of telling you that I would send some of the models to Paris to have them copied by artists there. I never should have thought your friend would have dared to undertake a thing of this importance. His boldness astonishes me a little, I confess; but what astonishes me a great deal, is his success—for that appears to me remarkable. Still, as I am by no means a better judge than you, I will show it to my daughter, who draws very well, and has a great deal of taste.'

The count rang.

'Is my daughter in the saloon?' asked he of his valet-de-chambre.'

'Mademoiselle is in her study in the turret,' replied the valet.

'Request her to come to me,' returned the count.

'In the turret!' thought Pierre Huguenin. 'She was there just now when I was in the workshop, and I did not suspect it! And the door is not yet replaced!'

His heart beat violently when Yseult entered.

'Look at this, my child,' said the count, shewing her the carved head; 'what do you think of it?'

'It is a very pretty thing,' replied mademoiselle de Villepreux; 'it is one of the figures of the old wainscotting, which they have taken down.

'It is not one of the old ones,' replied Pierre, with a joyful assurance: 'it is the work of my companion.'

'Or your own?' said she, looking at him.

'I have not so much skill,' replied he; 'I should not risk the trial. I could make the foliage and borders, some animals, at most; but human figures can come only from the chisel of my friend. Will you please mention your opinion, sir?'

In this trouble, Pierre had not been able to say 'mademoiselle' in addressing Yseult, and his confusion increased on seeing her smile at his mistake; but immediately resuming her serious air:

'Do you know, my father,' said she, 'that this is very curious and very remarkable? There is herein a simplicity of feeling of more value than art: and a professed artist would never have understood style as this workman has done. He would have wished to correct, to embellish. That which is a principal quality, the absence of knowledge, would have appeared to him a defect. He would have tormented and fashioned this wood without obtaining from it this simple

form, so true, so full of grace in its awkwardness. It seems as if this came, like the model, from the hand of a workman of the sixteenth century: the same character, the same ignorance of rules, the same frankness of intention. I assure you that it is beautiful in its kind, and that you need not seek elsewhere a sculptor to repair the whole of the wainscotting. And he must be well paid, it is worth the trouble; for this is a work which displays great intelligence. Chance has always served you well, my father; this is a new proof of it.'

Pierre heard Yseult's words resound in his ears like music. The praises she bestowed on his friend, and the expressions she employed, seemed to him to come from a dream. He no longer thought of seeing in her other than the woman of taste and intelligence, whose studious retreat had filled him with enthusiasm before he saw her person. While she was speaking with her father, he had summoned courage to look at her; and he found her, at that moment, as beautiful as he had imagined her. The reason was, that she spoke with animation of the things which filled the heart and the thoughts of l'Ami-du-trait and of the Corinthian's friend. He felt that she was his equal, so long as he looked at her under this aspect of an artist.

'We can then be something in her eyes,' thought he; 'and if she has the miserable thought of despising our manners and coarse clothes, at least she is compelled to understand that a certain genius must ennoble the labour of the hands.'

More proud and more happy at the praises bestowed on the Corinthian than if he had deserved them himself, he felt his timidity suddenly disappear.

'I wish the Corinthian were here,' said he, so that he could hear what is said of his work. I wish I could remember the words which have just been said, in order to transmit them to him, but I fear I have not understood sufficiently to repeat them.'

'Faith! I hardly understood them myself,' said the old count, laughing. 'Our language is enriched every day with such charming subtleties. Will you explain to me what you have just said, my daughter?'

'My father, replied Yseult, 'are there not things which are so much the *better* because they are not *well*? Is not the simple smile of a child a thousand times more charming than the affability of a prince? In all the arts, the greatest difficulty is to preserve natural grace, and this is what we cherish in the works of past times. Certainly they are not all good, and in the carved work of our chapel there is a complete ignorance of principles and rules. Still it is impossible to look upon it without pleasure and interest. The reason is, that the workmen of that epoch, and especially the unknown artisan

who did that work, had the feeling of the beautiful and true. There are indeed there heads too large, arms and legs in a forced motion, and of a defective proportion; but those heads have all a well-felt expression, those arms are graceful, those legs walk. Everything is full of grace and action. The ornaments are simple and broad. In a word, there is seen the product of the most happy natural faculties, and that holy confidence which constitutes the charm of childhood and the power of the artist.'

The old count looked at his daughter, and in spite of himself he looked at Pierre, impelled by the invincible need of having some one share the pleasure he experienced at hearing her talk so well. A smile of happiness and sympathy embellished the already so beautiful countenance of the young artisan. Did mademoiselle Villepreux perceive it? The count saw that what she had said was completely understood, and he could not doubt it when Pierre cried out:

'I can repeat that to the Corinthian word for word.'

'The Corinthian justifies his surname,' said the count. 'I feel interested in that young man. Where was he brought up?'

'Like all of us, on the roads,' replied Pierre. 'We work and we study as we stop in one city and another. We have our workshops and our schools, where we are each other's scholars. But as to the peculiar talents of which this work is the proof, no one has cultivated them in the Corinthian. It came to him one fine morning, and he formed himself entirely alone.'

'Is he not the son of some artist who has fallen into poverty?' asked the count.

'His father was a journeyman carpenter like himself,' replied Pierre.

'And he is poor, this good Corinthian?'

'Not exactly; he is young, strong, industrious, and full of hope.'

'But he has nothing?'

'Nothing but his hands and his tools.'

'And his genius,' said Yseult, as she looked at the carved head; 'for he has that, I assure you.'

'Well! we must cultivate it,' returned the count.—'Send him to Paris, to a drawing-school, and then place him with some good sculptor. Who knows? perhaps he may make statuary some day, and become a great artist. We will think of that, will we not, my daughter?'

'With all my heart,' replied Yseult.

'Persuade him to continue,' said the count to Pierre Huguenin. 'I will go and see him work; that will amuse me, and perhaps encourage him.

Pierre related the whole of this conversation to his friend, word for word, and Amaury dreamed statuary all night. As to Pierre, he dreamed of mademoiselle de Villepreux. He saw her under every form,—at one time cold and contemptuous, at another benevolent and familiar; and I know not how the image of the turret door was always mingled with this vision. Once it seemed to him that the young chatelaine, standing on the threshold of her study, called him, and that he ascended to that door without the assistance of a staircase, by the sole power of his will. She showed him a great book in which were traced mysterious characters and figures. But at the moment when he tried to decipher them, encouraged by the inspired smile of the young sybil, the door closed upon him with violence, and upon the pannel of that door he saw the face of Yseult; but it was only a face of carved wood, and he said to himself: 'Have I not been very foolish to take this sculpture for a living being?'

When he woke from this painful sleep, dissatisfied with the involuntary trouble which had invaded his thoughts, hitherto so serene, he resolved to put an end to his dream by replacing the door. His first care was to take it from the corner where he had concealed it. The iron work was still good, and, as he had been requested to replace it in whatever condition it might be, he carried his moveable ladder to the wall and began his work.

While he was strongly hammering, with his face turned towards the workshop, mademoiselle de Villepreux entered her study to look for a note which her grandfather had asked for; and, when Pierre turned, he saw her standing by a table and examining her papers without paying any attention to him. Still it was impossible that she should not have remarked his presence, for he made a great noise with his hammer.

There was a moment's respite in the din he was making. He had to measure a piece that was wanting in the upper plinth. At this moment Pierre faced the study. He was upon the threshold, and he felt less timid. He had the curiosity to look at mademoiselle de Villepreux, thinking indeed that she would not perceive him. Her back was turned to him; but he saw her slight and graceful form, and her magnificent black hair, of which she was so little vain that she wore it in a close twist, although at that period the women had adopted the fashion of crisped puffs, proud and threatening. There is in the absence of coquetry something so touching, that Pierre had too much delicacy of mind not to remark it; and he remarked it so long that Mademoiselle de Villepreux was drawn from her pre-occupation by the

silence, as happens when one goes to sleep in a noise and is awakened when the noise ceases.

'You are looking at this buffet?' said she to him, in a perfectly natural manner, and without an idea that she could herself be the object of such an attention.

Pierre was confused, blushed, stammered, and, wishing to answer yes, answered no.

'Well! look at it nearer,' said Yseult, who had not listened to his answer, and had resumed the arrangement of her papers,

Pierre made some steps into the study with a despairing courage. 'I shall not again see this place where I have passed such precious hours,' thought he; 'I must bid it farewell on looking at it for the last time.'

Yseult, who was seated at her table, said to him, without raising her head: 'Is it not beautiful?'

'This virgin of Raphael's?' said Pierre, entirely out of his senses and without thinking of what he said: 'Oh yes! it is very beautiful!'

Yseult, surprised that an engraving should attract the joiner more than the buffet, raised her eyes to him and saw his emotion, but without understanding it. She attributed it to the timidity which she had already noticed in him; and, from a habit of affable goodness which her grandfather had inculcated, she wished to reassure him. 'You like engraving?' said she to him.

'I like this one very much,' said Pierre. 'If my companion could see it, he would be very happy.'

'Do you wish me to lend it to you that you may show it to him?' said Yseult. 'Take it.'

'I should not dare,' stammered Pierre, quite overpowered by this familiar goodness which he had not expected.

'Yes! yes! take it down,' said Yseult, rising. She herself took the engraving from the wall to give to him. 'Could you copy this frame?' added she, making him remark the carved frame of the madonna.

'It is cabinet work,' replied he, 'and yet I think I could make one like it.'

'In that case, I shall want several. I have some very fine old engravings here.' As she spoke, she opened the portolio in which they were, and showed them to Pierre.

'I like this one best,' said he, stopping at a Mark Antony.

'You are right, it is the best,' replied Yseult, who took a candid pleasure at remarking the good sense and elevated judgment of the mechanic.

'Mon Dieu! how beautiful it is!' returned he; 'I do not understand it, but I feel that it is grand. One is happy to be able to see beautiful things often!'

'They are rare everywhere,' said Yseult, with the desire to remove the secret bitterness which this exclamatian revealed to her.

Pierre still looked at the engraving. He admired it, doubtless, but he was thinking of something else. Every second that passed in this appearance of intimacy with the being who began to throw his soul into commotion, flowed over him like an age of happiness, which he enjoyed trembling. Time had no real value at that moment; or, rather, that moment was to him separated from real life, as happens to us in dreams.

'Since it pleases you so much,' said Yseult, moved in her artist's soul, 'take it, I give it to you.'

Pierre would have preferred she had said: 'I request you to take it.' He compelled her to say so by refusing with a certain pride.

'You will give me much pleasure by accepting it,' returned Yseult; 'I can procure another for myself. Do not fear to deprive me of it.'

'Well!' said Pierre, 'I will make a frame for you in exchange.'

'In exchange?' said mademoiselle de Villepreux, who thought the word rather familiar.

'Why not?' said Pierre, who, in matters of delicacy, spontaneously recovered the tact and decision of an elevated nature. 'I am not compelled to accept a present.'

'You are right,' replied Yseult with the feeling of noble frankness. 'I accept the frame, and with great pleasure;' and she added, on seeing the gentle pride which shone on the mechanic's brow: 'If my grandfather were here, he would be delighted at seeing that engraving in your hands.'

Perhaps this innocent and dangerous interview would have been prolonged, but the little marchioness des Frenays interrupted it. She entered with a strange exclamation of surprise.

'What is the matter with you, then?' said Yseult to her with a sang-froid which suddenly disconcerted her.

'I expected to find you alone,' replied the marchioness.

'*Well! am I not alone?*' said Yseult, lowering her voice, that the workman might not hear this terrible word. But he did hear it: the heart sometimes catches better than the ear. This horrible reply fell like death upon that soul burning with love and happiness. He threw the engraving into the portfolio, the portfolio upon a chair, with a movement of horror which could not escape mademoiselle de Villepreux; and, resuming his hammer, he finished replacing the door with extreme rapidity. Then, departing without a bow, without turning his eyes towards the two ladies, he left the

workshop, full of hatred for his idol, full of contempt a himself also, because he had allowed himself to be flattered by foolish imaginations.

CHAPTER XIX.

When the young ladies were alone, a very singular conversation took place between them.

'What you said was very harsh to that poor young man,' said the marchioness, on seeing Pierre Huguenin depart.

'He did not hear it,' replied Yseult, 'and, besides, he could not have understood it.'

Yseult felt that she was lying to herself. She had very well remarked the mechanic's indignation; and as, in spite of the prejudices which the customs of the world might have given her, she was thoroughly good and just, she experienced a deep repentance and a kind of anguish. But she had too much pride to confess it.

'You may say what you please,' returned Josephine; 'the young man was wounded to the heart, and that was very easily seen.'

'He would be wrong to think I intended to humiliate him,' replied Yseult, who endeavoured to excuse herself in her own eyes. 'If you had found me tete-a-tete with any other man, no matter whom, except my father or my brother, I should have made the same answer.'

'Indeed!' retorted the marchioness. 'You would not have done it, cousin! it would have been defying any other than a poor devil of a mechanic; and as you know that, on the part of a man *like that*, you have nothing to fear, you have been brave and cruel very cheaply.'

'Well! if I did wrong, it is your fault, Josephine,' said mademoiselle de Villepreux, with a little ill-humour. 'You provoked that foolish answer by a misplaced exclamation.'

'Eh! Mon Dieu! What did I do that was so improper? The fact is that I was surprised at finding you engaged in an animated conversation with a journeyman joiner. Who would not have been so in my place. I uttered a cry in spite of myself; and when I saw the young man blush to the whites of his eyes, I was very sorry that I had entered so suddenly. But how could I have foreseen.

'My dear,' said Yseult, interrupting her, with a vexation which she did not remember to have experienced ever before, 'allow me to tell you that your explanations, your reflections,

and your expressions are more and more ridiculous, and that the whole are in very bad taste. Do me the favour to speak of something else. If I were to take my grandfather as a judge of the question, perhaps he would understand what you have in your mind better than I do, but I am not certain that he would be willing to tell me.'

'You give me a very severe lesson,' replied Josephine, 'and it is the first time that you have spoken to me in this manner, my dear Yseult. I have apparently said something very improper, since I have wounded you so much. My want of education is to blame; but you, who have so much sense, my cousin, I am astonished that you are not more indulgent towards me. If I have offended you, forgive me.'

'It is I who beg you to forgive me,' said Yseult, in an oppressed voice, and tenderly kissing Josephine, 'it is I who am wrong in every repect. One fault always occasions another. I spoke badly just now, and, because I suffer for it, I make you suffer. I assure you that I suffer more than you do at this moment.'

'Let us say no more about it,' said the marchioness, kissing her cousin's hands; 'one word from you, Yseult, will always make me forget everything.'

Yseult tried to smile, but a weight remained upon her heart. She said to herself that if the mechanic did hear the cruel speech for which she reproached herself, she never could efface it from his memory; and, whether from dissatisfied pride or love of justice, she felt a wound in the depths of her conscience: she was not accusustomod to be on bad terms with herself.

The marchioness endeavoured to distract her.

'Are you willing,' said she, 'that I should show you the drawing I made yesterday? You will correct it for me.'

'Willingly,' replied Yseult. And when the drawing was before her: 'It was a good idea of your's,' said she to her, 'to draw the chapel before it had lost its character as a ruin, and its air of desolation. I confess to you that I shall miss this disorder in which I was accustomed to see it, this gloomy colouring that is given to it by dust and age. I already regret those lamentable sounds occasioned by the wind penetrating through the cracks in the wall and the empty windows, the cries of the owls, and those little mysterious steps of the mice which seemed like a dance of elves by the light of the moon. It will be very convenient to me as a working-room; but, like everything that tends to comfort and utility, it will have lost its romantic poetry when the workmen have repaired it.'

Yseult examined her cousin's drawing, found it quite pretty, corrected some mistakes, in perspective, persuaded

her to colour it, and assisted her to arrange her easel upon the threshold of the gallery. She perhaps hoped that, by placing herself at her side, from time to time, she would find an opportunity of being affable with Pierre Huguenin, and of making him forget what she inwardly called her impertinence. It is certain that she desired it, and from this day she never saw him pass without experiencing a little shame. There was in this feeling an excessive candour and a kind of religious scruple, in wich the most austere casuist would have found nothing to blame, but at which some women of the world would have laughed—been shocked, perhaps.

However this may have been, she did not find the opportunity she sought. Pierre, as soon as he perceived her, left the workshop, or kept so far off, and was so busy with his work, that it was impossible to exchange a word, a bow, even a look with him. Yseult understood this resentment, and no longer had the courage to return to the threshold while Josephine's drawing lasted. Thus, strange event, there was one of the most delicate secrets between mademoiselle de Villepreux, the lord's daughter, and Pierre Huguenin, the journeyman joiner; a secret that was concealed in the fibres of the heart more than it was formed in the thought, and which each knew must occupy the other, though neither would have consented to give an account to himself for this sorrowful sympathy.

Very different things, indeed, were passing in the mind of the marchioness; and I know not what course to take, O respectable reader, to make you perceive them. She drew, and her drawing did not finish. Yseult, who was much interested in the reading and analytic compilation of works quite serious for her sex and age, remained a part of the day in her study, the door of which was always open between her and her cousin, while the curtain concealed her from the eyes of the workmen. She no longer went to the tribune, and saw Josephine's drawing only when the latter brought it to her. Now, Josephine showed it to her less and less, and ended it by not showing it at all. Yseult was astonished at this, and said to her one evening:—

'Well, cousin, what have you done with your drawing? It must be a masterpiece, for you have been at work on it a whole week.'

'It is horrible,' replied the marchioness quickly; 'shocking, spoiled, daubed! Don't ask me to let you see it—I am ashamed of it; I have a great mind to tear it up and begin again.'

'I admire your courage,' returned Yseult; 'but if it would not be asking too great a sacrifice of you, I would request you to stop where you are. The noise of the workmen and the

dust they make, inconvenience me very much. I have the habit of studying here, and I believe it would be impossible for me to study anywhere else. But I must give it up if you continue to leave my door open.'

'Well, if I should draw with the door shut?' said the marchioness timidly.

'I don't know very well how to give a reason for what I am going to say,' replied Yseult after a moment's silence; 'but it seems to me that would not be proper for you; how does it seem to you?'

'Proper! the word astonishes me in your mouth.'

'Oh! I know that I told you one was alone, though tête-à-tête with a workman; but this was a false idea as well as an insolent speech, and you know that I reproach myself for it. No, you would not be alone in the midst of six workmen.'

'In the midst? Heaven save me from going to place myself in the very middle of the workshop! It would not be at all a good point of view to draw from.'

'I know very well that the gallery is twenty feet from the floor, and that you are supposed to be in another apartment from that in which they work; but in fine, what do I know? I ask you yourself, Josephine—you must know better than I what is proper and what is not.'

'I will do whatever you wish,' replied the marchioness, with a little pout which did not make her ugly.

'It seems to vex you, my poor child?' returned Yseult.

'I confess to you, this drawing amused me. There was something pretty to be done, and I should have succeeded at last.'

'I never knew you so fond of drawing, Josephine.'

'And you—I never knew you so English, Yseult.'

'Well, since you lay so much stress upon it, go on; I will still bear the noise of the hammer which splits my head, of that unfortunate saw which gives me the toothache, and this villanous dust which spoils all my books and my furniture.'

'No, no, I don't wish you to do that. But what difference do you think there is between our being separated by a door or by a curtain?'

'I? I don't know; it seems to me that with the curtain you appear not to be alone, and that with the door it will be very different.'

'Do you believe those people take any notice of me at the distance they are from the gallery? I say more—do you believe that I am *anybody to them?*'

'Josephine,' said Yseult, laughing and blushing at the same time, 'you are a hypocrite. Why did you make an exclama-

time when you found Pierre Huguenin here, talking with me, a week ago?

I am sure I don't know, not I! really, I know nothing about it, Yseult; it was a piece of stupidity on my part.'

'And it was, perhaps, one in me to consider that tête-à-tête insignificant—I have thought of it since. A man is always a man, whatever they may say. I certainly would not talk tête-à-tête in my study with Isidore Lerebours for example.'

'Because he is a fool, an ill-mannered coxcomb!'

'A mechanic, like Pierre Huguenin for example, who is neither ill-mannered, nor a coxcomb, nor a fool, is much more of a man, then, than M. Isidore.'

'Oh, that is certain.'

'And yet you would not go and draw in a workshop where there were several Isidores assembled!'

'Oh no, certainly! yet I should think myself very much alone; and if I were condemned to live in a desert island with the most perfect among them—'

'You would draw the portrait of the ugliest animals rather than his, I can conceive that. But who then is this personage I see there?'

While talking with her cousin, Yseult had opened the portfolio of drawings and found that of the workshop. She had cast her eyes upon it without the absent Josephine's thinking to prevent her, and had just remarked a pretty little figure gracefully standing upon the shaft of a gothic column.

Josephine uttered a little cry, rushed towards the drawing, and wished to snatch it from the hands of her cousin, who kept it from her by running round the chamber. This play lasted some moments; then Josephine, who was very nervous, became quite red with vexation, snatched at the drawing and tore it, one half remaining in Yseult's hands: it was exactly the half on which the personage figured.

'No matter' said Yseult laughing, 'he is very genteel, really! why are you so vexed? Well, now your eyes are full of tears! what a child you are! you must needs tear your drawing! It is done, are you sorry for it? I will paste it together again—it will never show—in fact, it would be a pity, it is so pretty.'

'You are not doing right, Yseult. I did not want you to see it.'

'You show self-love with me now! Are you not my pupil? Since when have pupils hidden their work from the master? But tell me then, Josephine, who is this personage?'

'But you can see; a figure of fancy, a page of the middle ages.'

'Bah! that's an anachronism. If the chapel were existing, the page would be well placed; but when it is in ruins, he is out of date. It is not very probable that this poor young man can have been preserved there in all his freshness, and with the same clothes, for three hundred years.'

'There, now you are laughing at me, that is what I wished to avoid."

'If you are vexed, I shall not dare so say any more. And yet—'

'Well, say on since you have begun. Don't restrain yourself.'

'Josephine, that page resembles the Corinthian enough to frighten one.'

'The Corinthian, with a slashed doublet and a page's cap! You are crazy.'

'The doublet is closely related to a vest; and as to this cap, it is cousin german to the Corinthian's, which is not at all ugly, and becomes him very much. He wears his hair long, and cut exactly like this: in fine, he has a charming face like that page. Well! this is his ancestor, we will say no more about it.'

'Yseult,' said the marchioness, weeping, 'I did not think you were so cruel.'

The tone with which these words were pronounced, and the tears which escaped from Josephine's eyes, made Yseult start with surprise. She let fall the drawing, thinking she was in a dream, and tried to console her cousin, but without knowing how she could have have offended her; for she had had no other intention but to make a very innocent joke, which was by no means a new thing between them. She dared not let her thoughts dwell upon the discovery which these tears made her suspect, and at once repelled the idea as absurd and insulting to her cousin. The latter, seeing Yseult's candeur, wiped away her tears, and their quarrel ended as all did, by kisses and bursts of laughter.

Well! you have guessed it, O penetrating reader! the poor Josephine, having read many romances (let this be a salutary warning for yourself), experienced an irresistible desire to bring into her own life a romance of which she should be the heroine; and the hero was found. He was there, young, handsome as a demi-god, intelligent, and pure, more than any of those who have a right of citizenship in the most proper romances. Only he was a journeyman joiner, which was contrary to all received usage, I confess; but he was crowned, besides his beautiful hair, with the glory of an artist. This genius, discovered by a miracle, was flattered and praised every evening in the

saloon, by the old count, who made for himself an amusement and a little vanity for having discovered him, and this interesting position made him quite the fashion at the chateau. At this day he would be a worn-out character: people have already seen so many young prodigies as to have got tired of them; and then it is very certain that the people has been recognised as the great centre of intelligence and inspiration. But in those fine days of the restoration, of which I am speaking, it was a novelty to perceive this, a boldness not to deny it, and a lordly generosity to favour its developement. Remember that in those times, already so far removed from the year 1840 by manners and opinions, persons *comme il faut* did not wish that the people should learn to read, and for a reason. The old Count de Villepreux was considered immoderately liberal by the lordlings his neighbours, and that very liberalism displayed originality and exquisite taste in the eyes of the educated youth of the country. It was quite natural that the romantic Josephine should fall into this fashionable enthusiasm, without understanding its extent. She saw in her hero a Giotto or a Benvenuto in the bud; and more than all he was called neither *la Rose*, nor *la Tulipe*, nor *la Rejouissance*, nor *le Flambeau-d'amour:* the least of these surnames would have sounded badly to the ear and would have *depoetized* him, as is now said; but he had a surname which pleased and which they liked to confirm to him; he was called the Corinthian.

Why was the Corinthian remarked, and why was not Pierre Huguenin? The latter had no less success in the saloon; that is, when, in the evening conversations, the Corinthian was mentioned, Pierre always shared the praises which were given him. The count admired his beautiful bearing, his distinguished air, his manners, the natural dignity of which was well worthy of remark, his upright, intelligent, sensible language, and especially his ardent and poetical friendship for the young sculptor. But the case was that the sculptor was endowed with the sacred fire, and must have reflected it upon his friend the joiner. When they said these things the marchioness's brow became animated; she mistook her cards in playing at *reversi* with her uncle, or let her balls of silk fall as she embroidered at her frame; and then she hazarded a timid glance at her cousin. It seemed to her that she must sooner or later discover on analogous romance between her and Pierre Huguenin, and this fancy of her imagination gave her courage. Still the peaceful Yseult spoke to her of Pierre with so much calmness and frankness, that there could be no illusion on that side.

But if Josephine understood that people could and should pay attention to Pierre, she had none the less given the pre-

ference to the young Amaury. They could more easily be familiar with the latter, who was looked upon rather as a child. They called him *the little sculptor;* they conversed about the destiny they dreamed of for him; they went every day to see him work; the count was familiar with him, called him *his child*, and put his hand on his head to present him to the strangers who came on a visit, and whom he carried to the workshop. They remarked the breadth and height of his forehead; a country doctor, a partisan of Lavater and Gall, wished to take a cast of his head. In fine he had a more brilliant success than Pierre, with whom no one could play in that manner. It is sad to say it, but it is none the less true, that the greater part of the women of the world wait, before giving their preference to a man, for the judgment that may be passed on him in the saloons; and he that is most liked, is, in their opinion, the most accomplished. Josephine had been too sensitive to the seductions of vanity, not to have yielded a little to this mistake. She therefore had her head turned for the handsome child, and could no longer conçeal it. Matters had reached such a pitch that they joked her openly about it in the family, and she received the pleasantry with a good grace. She even provoked it sometimes; which was quite a good manœuvre to prevent the remark from becoming serious. This is why her cousin sometimes permitted herself to laugh about it with her, not thinking that she could in any way afflict her by what seemed to her a play; and this is why she was so astonished at seeing her weep on this occasion. But those tears gave her no information as yet; for Josephine explained them as proceeding from an artist's self-love, a headache, anything she chose to invent.

All the flatteries of the chateau had not as yet troubled the good Corinthian's brain. The old count's fondness certainly proceeded from a great fund of benevolence and generosity; but he was very imprudent, for he might have misled the judgment of that young man torn from his peaceful obscurity to be thrown at once into the career of success and ambition. Happily Pierre Huguenin watched over him like a Providence, and retained him in his senses by wise criticisms. On his side, the elder Huguenin, even while frankly admiring the skill and the taste of the young sculptor, gave him the paternal advice to keep on his guard against praise. He had as yet no reason to complain of the new direction which the labour of his journeyman was about to take; for the latter, faithful to his word, carved only on Sundays, or two or three hours in the evening, in the way of trial, and all his week days were consecrated to finish the wainscotting, for which he had engaged his services. He was not to carve definitively until he had entirely satisfied his master. But if the old joiner did

not blame this bold attempt (even seeing with pleasure his son become associated in it—for upon this field ceased all jealousy of the trade, all competition in talent), he did not entirely approve the frequent and friendly relations that had been established between the saloon and the workshop. 'Certainly,' said he, 'I have no complaint to make of the old count. He is a just man, and his usual economy is changed to magnificence when he meets with merit. He has a very honest style of proceeding. His daughter, also, is prepossessing and good, under her quiet and indifferent manner. The young man (he referred to Raoul, Yseult's brother) is rather shallow, lazy, and, as our Berrichon says, *good for nothing*; but, take him all in all, he is not a bad boy; and when his dogs have eaten our hens, he beats his dogs without sparing them. In fine, you can see by the manner of the steward towards us, that his master has ordered him to be polite and humane with *poor folks*. But, in spite of all this, I cannot, for myself, love those people as I should love other people, people of our own kind. I see that father Lacrête is not satisfied with them, because his rather unceremonious manners, and his very natural desire to earn as much as he can, are not well received at the chateau. M. the count may do what he will, he will not make me believe that he loves the people, although he passes for a famous liberal, and the stupids call him a jacobin. He will indeed take off his hat to him of us who has the most sense; but we have only to forget ourselves a little with him, and see how he'll get *on his high horse* to ride over the peasants! He will take a louisd'or from his pocket for a poor devil to drink his health with; but let us try to drink to the republic, we shall see how he will pay the fiddler! I see the young lady of the chateau give alms, go and come among the sick like a sister of charity, talk with a beggar as with a rich man, and wear dresses less handsome than those of her chambermaid; no one can say that she wishes to crush the village, or that she has ever refused to do a service; but go and propose to her to marry the son of a large farmer, had he as much education and as many crowns as she, she will tell you she cannot lower herself. I don't blame her; the bourgeois are no better than the nobles. But remember, my children, the great will always be the great, and the little will always be the little. They seem to try to make you forget this; but let yourselves be caught, and you will see how they will refresh your memory! oh—oh! I haven't lived till now without knowing how much a vassal weighs in the hand of his lord.'

There was one thing which especially displeased father Huguenin: this was the assiduity of the marchioness in placing herself on the tribune to draw, while the men were at work

before her. He seemed to fear lest his son should take too much notice of her. 'What does that handsome lady come there for?' said he in a very low tone when she had gone. 'Is it the place of a marchioness to keep herself up there like a hen on a pole, while chaps like you look at the tips of her feet? Suppose she has a little foot; great Peggy would have a little foot too, if, instead of wearing a wooden shoe, she had kept it in a slipper all her life. And I, I don't see what there is so handsome in it. Can she walk better, can she jump higher? And besides, whom does she want to please, whom does she want to marry? Isn't she married? And if she were not, would she like a mechanic? In fine, what does she do up there on her perch? Is it to watch us; is it to make our portraits? Are we not well dressed gentlemen in blouses and shirt sleeves, to serve her as models? They say that there are in Paris people who are paid for having long beards, and *getting themselves put in a picture.* But that is the trade of idlers, and not ours.'

'Faith!' said the Berrichon, 'I shouldn't earn much at that trade, for I am not handsome; and unless there was a monkey to stick in a picture, I shouldn't have much business. But do you know, our master, that she is very lucky, the little baroness, or the little countess, as they call her, to find herself with honest boys like us, who never say ugly words, and sing only *moral* songs? For, in fine, there are workmen who would never let themselves be stared at like that, and who would make her go away, by saying coarse words on purpose, before her.'

'That is what we shall never do, I hope,' said Amaury; 'we owe respect to a woman, whether she be a beggar or a marchioness; and besides, we respect ourselves too much to use coarse language. We are here to work, we work. That lady works also. I don't know if it be on something beautiful or useful. We must think so; otherwise what pleasure would she find in leaving her society for curs?'

The marchioness had made no other impression upon Amaury. He had indeed remarked that she was pretty, in consequence of hearing it said; but he did not wish to believe that she was there for his sake, as the Berrichon and the apprentices thought. Besides, he had nothing but sculpture in his mind, and nothing in his heart but the Savinienne.

CHAPTER XX.

The old count was not very well known in his village of Villepreux. He did not take possession of this domain until after the revolution, and had only come to it at distant periods, and remained three months at most. It was the least splendid of his habitations, and the most retired of his estates towards the peaceful interior of France. At that period the Sologne was not dotted, as now, with fine growing forests, nor crossed by practicable roads. That region where so much still remains to be done, was a desert in which the wretched population of the country barely subsisted, but in which capitalists could attempt happy ameliorations. Under the pretext of devoting himself to agriculture, the old lord had made longer stoppages during the past two years, and this time had installed himself with all the preparations which the project of a long abode brings with it. The works which he caused to be undertaken, and the quantity of trunks, of books and domestics, which were each day seen to arrive, announced a regular taking possession. This gave rise, as may be supposed, to many comments; for, in the provinces, nothing can happen naturally, there must be a mysterious explanation for everything. Some said that the old lord came there to compose memoirs, which seemed to be the object of the long dictations he made to his daughter, and the study life he led with her. Others inclined to think that this same daughter, who appeared so dear to him, must have become entangled, at Paris, in some unhappy love, to cure her of which they came to watch over her in solitude and seclusion. The habitual paleness of this young person, her serious air, her retiring habits, her long watchings, were things strange enough in the eyes of the inhabitants of the country to require to be explained by a romance.

This last rumour sometimes reached the ears of Pierre Huguenin, and did not appear to him devoid of foundation. Mademoiselle de Villepreux 'was so different, in fact, from other young persons of her age, her cousin's freshness and vivacity presented such a contrast by her side—and then the eccentricity of her habits was so exaggerated, that the knew not what to think. But what was it to him? This was the question he asked himself; and yet, when he heard this supposed passion spoken of, he felt his heart oppressed in a

strange manner, and he made useless efforts to drive away a pre-occupation which appeared to him diseased and fatal.

In a short time the Count de Villepreux became wonderfully popular in the village. He gave a great deal of work, and paid for it with a liberality they had not known in him. He influenced the curate, by means of presents for his cellar and his church, and compelled him to be tolerant and to let the people dance on Sundays. He opposed the prefect in the matter of the conscription, and influenced the physicians named on the council of revision. In fine, he opened his park on Sundays to all the inhabitants of the village, and even paid the musicians to make them dance in the warren, under the shadow of a fine old oak called the Rosny, like all venerable trees honoured by that illustrious origin.

Father Huguenin's workmen arrayed themselves in their best on that day, and led out, in preference to the peasant girls, the smart abigails of the chateau. The Berrichon there displayed all his graces, and his capers did not fail of success. The Corinthian also gave himself up to this amusement, but without caring for one partner more than for another, and perhaps only to satisfy a little childish coquetry; for he was so graceful in his blouse of grey trimmed with green, and the Swiss cap he had brought from his journeys became him so well, that all eyes were fixed upon him, and the young girls were envious of the honour of dancing with him.

The old count came with his family, at the hour when the sun declined and the air became fresh, to look at these village dances and familiarize *the good people* with his signorial presence. They were flattered by the pleasure he took in it, and the agreeable things he knew how to say to each. There was a turf seat under the oak, on which no one was allowed to sit beside him and his daughter, but to the side of which he drew the elders of the country to talk with them—even father Huguenin, who vainly affected his grand republican air, and who allowed himself to be caught quite like another, though he would not acknowledge it.

In the beginning, young Raoul de Villepreux danced with the prettiest girls, and never failed to kiss them, which made their sweethearts look rather sour; but this had no effect; so that one day father Lacrete, who was not far from the seat of turf, clenched his fist with a half-bantering, half-savage air, and swore, by all the gods whose name he could invoke, that, in his time, he would not have allowed his girl to be kissed by any one, were he the dauphin of France. Father Lacrete had had a bill cut down by the architect of the chateau, and made open opposition to the family.

The count had no wish to compromise his popularity, did not take up the old locksmith's words; but neither did he

let them fall, and the young lord appeared no more at the dances under the oak.

M. Isidore danced, and God knows with what ridiculous pretence, and what impertinent airs of triumph! The village girls were dazzled by them; but the chambermaids, who understood good manners, and the deputy's daughter, who was quite a princess, considered him too familiar. Madame des Frenays had danced with her cousin Raoul in the first days, and had not disdained to put her little hand into that of the peasant who stood opposite her in the contredance. But that hand was covered with a glove, which appeared very insulting to the greater part of the dancers, and which prevented their asking her, though she was dying with desire to be asked, for she danced charmingly; her little feet barely grazed the turf, and there are no clowns for a pretty woman who sees herself admired.

When Raoul disappeared from the village dance by superior order, the marchioness, no longer able to resist, accepted Isidore's invitation. But, after Isidore, no one presented himself; and she complained of it quite naively to her uncle when he asked her why she danced no more.

'You see what it is to be a fine lady,' said the count. 'But let me see if I can't find a partner for you. Come here, my child,' said he to the Corinthian, who was two steps from him; 'I see clearly that you are very desirous to ask my niece, but do not dare. Now, I declare to you that she will be delighted to dance. Come, offer your hand to her, and take places for a contredance! I will call the figures."

The Corinthian was too much spoiled at the chateau to be astonished or confused at such an honour. 'It is the first time I ever had a marchioness for a partner,' said he to himself; 'no matter, I will make her dance as well as any other —and I don't see why I should be so dazzled.' This was an inward reply to the staring glances of the Berrichon, who was placed opposite to him, and was quite stupefied by the adventure.

Even while leaping lightly upon the green with his partner, the Corinthian, who, in spite of his inward courage, had not yet dared to look her in the face, perceived that this queen of the ball was so confused that she made mistakes in the figures. At first, he understood nothing of this, and, wishing to assist her in recovering her place without being reached by the Berrichon's impetuous flings, he took the liberty, but without any other feeling than that of a natural deference, to place his hand under the marchioness's elbow in order to prevent her falling. That elbow, bare between a short sleeve and a mitten of black silk, was so round, so small, and so soft, that the Corinthian did not feel it at first, and seeing

the Berrichon launched in an unrestrainable pirouette and the marchioness totter, he clasped her elbow to restore her equilibrium. But that pressure was electrical. Josephine became red as a cherry, and the Corinthian had an attack of sudden timidity and insurmountable discomfort. He hastened to reconduct her to her seat as soon as the contredance was finished, and withdrew with a kind of terror, But no sooner did the violin give the signal for the next contredance, than he found himself, as by magic, at the side of Madame des Frenays, and her hand was in his. What form had he employed to ask her anew, and how had he dared? He never knew,—a cloud floated about him, and he acted as if in a dream.

From that day, the Corinthian danced with the marchioness every Sunday, and oftener three times than once. His example encouraged the others, and Josephine no longer missed a dance. When the Corinthian was not her partner, he was her *vis-à vis*, and their hands touched, their breaths mingled, and their eyes sought each other, to be withdrawn and to seek each other again. All these little prodigies take place so spontaneously when one likes dancing, that one has no time to reflect, and the spectators no time to perceive.

Yseult never danced, although her grandfather often requested her; and the marchioness, a little ashamed of the pleasure she took in it, would have wished to draw her into the village-whirl. Was it disdain? was it indifference on the part of the young chatelaine? Pierre, keeping always quite distant from her, and covered either by the groups or by the thickets behind which he slowly wandered, often had his eyes fixed upon her, and asked himself what thoughts filled that impenetrable brow, in which so much energy was hidden beneath so much languor. Mademoiselle de Villepreux always had the appearance of a fatigued person, who takes pleasure in making no use of her faculties while she awaits the opportunity of applying them to new deeds of strength. Pierre studied her like a book in an unknown language, in which we hope to find some word that will enable us to guess the meaning. But that look was sealed, and not a syllable revealed the mystery.

Still she did not appear to be annoyed. From time to time she addressed herself to the women of the village, and with a polite familiarity, the shade of which was very difficult to seize. She seemed to avoid the affectation of goodness which was revealed by every gesture of her grandfather, and, at the same time, she was seriously and tranquilly benevolent. She never intimidated the persons with whom she conversed; and it was impossible to perceive the least difference in her manners or features whether she was talking to her grand-

father or cousin, to Father Huguenin or the village children. Although poor Pierre had upon his heart an insult which appeared to him ineffaceable, he sometimes said to himself that she had the feeling or the instinct of equality in the clearest and most complete degree. But this was too exalted an idea for the people of the village. They did not hate *the demoiselle*, as they called her, but they did not feel for her that attachment which the old count knew how to inspire. 'She does not show it,' said they, 'but one would say that within she is proud.

One day, Amaury found a volume which the marchioness, who no longer came to draw in the workshop, had left in the park. He carried it to his friend Pierre, knowing well how much he loved books.

In fact, the sight of a book always gave Pierre a thrill of desire and joy. For many days he had been deprived of reading, and he imagined that this favourite relaxation would drive away the sad thoughts by which he was besieged.

It was one of Walter Scott's novels, I do not remember which, but one of those in which the hero, a simple mountaineer, or poor adventurer, becomes enamoured of some lady, queen or princess, is loved by her in secret, and, after a succession of charming or terrible adventures, at last becomes her lover and husband. This intrigue, at once simple and piquant, is, as is known, the favourite theme of the king of novel-writers. If he be the poet of lords and monarchs, he is also the poet of the peasant, of the soldier, of the outlaw, and the mechanic. It is true that, faithful to his aristocratic prejudices, and too English to be bold to the end, he never fails to discover for his noble vagabonds an illustrious family, a rich inheritance, or to make them ascend, step by step, the ladder of honours and fortune, in order to place them at the feet of their ladies, without exposing the latter to a misalliance by a pure love-marriage. But it is also certain that we must give him credit for having painted the people in poetic colours, for having drawn from them grand and severe figures, whose devotedness, bravery, intelligence, and beauty, rival the splendour of the principal hero, sometimes even to surpass and efface him. Without any doubt, he understood and loved the people, not from principle, but by instinct, and the artist was not blinded by the prejudices of the gentleman.

Those novels, in spite of their exquisite and adorable chastity, are quite as dangerous for young heads, quite as subversive of the old social order, as novels must be which are romantic and read with avidity by all classes of society. It is therefore to Sir Walter Scott that must be attributed the disorder which had become organized, if we may so speak, in the brain of Josephine. She dreamed that she was a lady

of the fifteenth or sixteenth century who was to be pursued by a young artisan, the foundling of some great family, soon to rush forward in the career of talent and glory, and to recover his titles or attain them by his merit and reputation. Had not most of the great masters of art issued from the common people; and what marchioness, even having a genealogy, would not have been flattered at being the idol and ideal of those illustrious proletaries, Jean Goujon, Puget, Canova, and a hundred others counted by the history of art in all its branches?

This volume was devoured by the two friends in an evening, and gave them such a desire to know the rest of the novel, that, not daring to request the loan of it at the chateau, they hired it from the library of the nearest city. This reading produced upon them an effect equally deep but different. Pierre saw in it the fanciful idealization of woman; the Corinthian there saw the possible realization of his own destiny, not as the unknown heir of some great fortune, but as the predestined conqueror of glory in art. He naively confessed to Pierre his ambition and his hopes.

'You are happy,' replied his friend; 'to have these sweet chimeras in your mind. And after all, why should they not be realized? the arts are now the only career in which titles and privileges are not absolutely necessary. Work therefore, my brother, and do not be rebuffed. God has given you much: genius and love! It seems that he has marked you on the forehead for a brilliant existence; for, at the age when most of us still vegetate in gross ignorance, interrogating with apathetic sadness the problem of our future, you are already sure of your vocation; you are distinguished by persons capable of appreciating and assisting you. But this still is nothing: you are beloved by the most beautiful and the most noble woman there is perhaps in the world.'

When Pierre spoke of the Savinienne, Amaury sank into a melancholy which his friend in vain endeavoured to combat. 'How can you be so deeply affected by an absence of which you know the termination,' said he to him, 'and in which you are sustained by the certainty of being faithfully and courageously loved? I surprise myself envying your misfortune.'

Amaury usually replied to these reproaches that the future was covered by an impenetrable veil, and that the hope with which he had flattered himself was perhaps too beautiful to be realized. 'Do you believe then,' said he, 'that Romanet will easily give up the treasure I dispute with him? During a year which he will pass near the mother, seeing her every day and giving her at every hour proofs of his devotedness and passion, do you believe that she will not make wiser reflections than those of which you were the confidant in an

hour of trouble and enthusiasm? When she talked with you, we all had the fever. It was after violent emotions; after a scene in which, to avenge her, I had committed murder: a murder, the fatal remembrance of which pursues me incessantly and throws a gloomy reflection upon my thoughts of love! At this time she perhaps already repents of what she said to you; and before the termination of her mourning, perhaps she will regret the kind of engagement which that confidence made her indirectly contract with me, as she then regretted the engagement which her husband made her contract with Bon-soutien.'

These doubts, which were not in harmony with the Corinthian's bold and believing character, astonished Pierre, the more that they seemed to increase each day, so that he attributed this dejection to the involuntary murder committed by his friend. He tried to drive away the anguish of that bitter remembrance and to justify the Corinthian in his own eyes.

'No, I have no remorse,' replied the young man to him, 'Every morning and every evening I raise my soul to God, and I know that it is at peace with him; for I detest violence; I feel neither hatred, nor anger, nor revenge, and the quarrels of the companionship excite in me only horror and pity. I saw fall her whom I loved, struck by a blow which I thought mortal; I killed her assassin, in an impulse of defence more legitimate than that of a soldier in battle. But that blood shed between the Savinienne and me will leave sad stains; it is a horrible presage, of which I cannot think without shuddering.'

'It is absence that renders this idea still more horrible to you. If the Savinienne were here, you would forget, in the happiness of seeing and hearing her, the gloomy images which float in your memory.'

'That is certain; but perhaps I should then be more culpable than I am now. Pierre, you told me, not long since, that you were disgusted with the companionship, and that you experienced the need of withdrawing from all connected with those criminal and senseless strifes. I have many more motives now than you had then to experience the same disgust. I cannot endure the idea of again plunging into them and especially of allowing the companion of whom I have dreamed to live there. The Savinienne must leave that sad vocation; I would wish to take her from that cut-throat house, the threshold of which I should never pass without a cold sweat and a moral shudder.'

'I hope,' replied Pierre, 'that time will soften this impression, the bitterness of which I understand too well, but by which you are perhaps more overpowered than necessary

Remember the days of happiness passed in that so religiously hospitable mansion, which the Savinienne sanctifies by her presence. Firmer and stronger in the storm than you, she has always preserved her faith and her clemency for the service of the victims whom new furies might still break upon her hearthstone. Her part is very great, I assure you; and the more I see her surrounded by dangers, the more do I consider her worthy of respect and love, that woman pure in the midst of revel, and calm in the bosom of the furies which rage around her. It seems to me that she there fulfils a duty more august than that of a queen in the midst of our court, and that in seeking a more peaceful and more elegant life she would renounce a mission which heaven has confided to her.'

'O Pierre !' said the Corinthian with emotion, 'your mind ennobles the meanest things, and even makes divine the most elevated. Yes, the Savinienne is a saint; but I cannot love her without desiring to remove her from hell.'

'You will do so some day,' replied Pierre. 'When you have secured, by the sweat of your brow, a more pleasing existence, you will be permitted to associate in it your companion. Then she will indeed have laboured enough, have suffered enough for her numerous children of the tour of France; and this change of position will be the recompense, not the abjuration, of her duties.'

'And in how many years will that take plsce ?' cried the Corinthian, with an expression of misery by which Pierre was strongly struck.

'O my dear child !' said he to him, 'I have never seen you in such haste to live. How! does your courage fail you in the moment of your life when you have most strength and power ?'

The Corinthian hid his face in his hands. Seated upon a fallen tree in the park of the chateau, the two friends had been conversing thus for more than an hour. It was Sunday, and the musicians who were going to the warren for the ball champêtre, passed along the outside wall playing upon their instruments in the midst of the laughs and songs of the village youth who escorted them.

The Corinthian rose quickly.

'Pierre,' said he, 'this is sadness enough for to day. Let us go and dance under the Rosny; will you ?'

'I never dance,' replied Pierre, 'and I am glad of it, for it seems to me but a sad resource against sorrow.'

'From what do you see that ?'

'From the manner in which you invite me.'

'It is a singular pleasure, in fact,' said the Corinthian, reseating himself; 'it is like that of wine, which exhilarates

you, and which distracts you from your troubles only to bring them back more heavy the next day.'

'Let us go,' said Pierre, rising in his turn, 'all means are good, provided we live. It is good to forget, for it is good to remember afterwards. One is pleasant, the other salutary. Come, let us go to the dance.'

'You ought rather to prevent my going, Pierre,' replied the Corinthian, without rising. 'You do not know to what you advise me; you do not know where you lead me.'

'Then you have concealed something from me?' said Pierre, resuming his seat by his friend's side.

'And you, have you guessed nothing then?' replied Amaury. 'Have you not seen then, that there is there, under the oak, a woman whom I certainly do not love, for I do not know her, but from whom I cannot withdraw my eyes, because she is beautiful, and beauty has an irresistible power? Is not art the worship of the beautiful? How could I ever meet the glance of two beautiful eyes and turn away my own? That is impossible, Pierre! And yet I do not love her, can I? All this is therefore very ridiculous.'

'But what do you mean? I do not understand you. Who is this woman? How can any other than the Savinienne appear beautiful to you? If I loved, if I were beloved, it seems to me that there would be but one woman for me on the earth. I should not even know that others existed.'

'Pierre, you understand nothing of all that. You have never been in love. Perhaps you believe in a superhuman power which is not in love. Listen: I will open my heart to you; I will tell you what takes place in me, and, if you can see it more clearly than myself, I will follow your advice. I have told you, there is below there a woman whom I look at with emotion, and whom I think of with still more emotion, when I do not see her. Do you remember what you said to me in the workshop some five or six days ago about a little figure I had carved in one of my medallions?'

'It was the head, the hair, if not the features of a lady—'

'It is very useless to name her. There are but two: one is the image of indifference, the other of life. You asserted that I intended to make the portrait of the latter, I denied it. In fact, I had no such intention; but, in spite of me, something of her graceful form did come from under my chisel. You insisted; you called William to witness. We talked rather loudly perhaps, and I do not know if what we say in the workshop is not heard in the cabinet of the turret. We came away; and then, at night, I returned to take the book we had left there. You waited for me at the house to finish it. You waited a long while. I told you that I had walked a little in the park to drive away a headache. I did not deceive you;

my head was on fire, and I walked a great deal after I left the workshop.'

'What happened there, then? I could not have imagined it. A lady! a marchioness! You a mechanic, a journeyman! —Corinthian; were you not dreaming, my child?'

'I was not dreaming, and nothing very romantic took place. Listen, nevertheless. I entered the workshop without a light; I did not need one to find my book, for I knew exactly where I had left it. I saw the bottom of the workshop lighted, and a lady examining my sculpture, precisely the little head which resembles her. On seeing me, she uttered a cry and let her candle fall. Then we were both in the dark; I had not recognised her certainly, I don't know why, but I approached, feeling my way, and asking who was there. I extended my hands and suddenly found myself nearer her than I had supposed. She did not answer though I had her in my arms. My head was bewildered, the darkness emboldened me, I pretended to be mistaken; I approached my trembling lips, naming mademoiselle Julie; I touched tresses the perfume of which intoxicated me. She pushed me away, but gently, saying:

'"It is not Julia, it is I, M. Amaury; do not be deceived."

'She did not seriously try to disengage herself, and I—I could not resolve to let her go.

'"Who are you then?" said I, "I do not know your voice."

'Then she escaped from me, for I did not dare retain her, and she began to run in the dark. I did not follow her; she struck against a bench and fell, uttering a cry. I rushed forward, I raised her, I thought she was hurt.

'"How could you be afraid of me, madam?"

'"But how did you not recognise me sir?"

'"If madam the marchioness had named herself, I should not have taken the liberty to approach."

'"You expected to find Julia instead of me? She was to have come here?"

'"By no means, madam; but I thought your chambermaid was playing me some trick, and I was so far from believing—"

'"I was looking for a book which I thought I had left in the gallery, and which I saw there near your sculpture."

'"Does that book belong to madam the marchioness? If I had known it—"

'"Oh! you have done very well to read it if you wished. Shall I leave it for you still?"

'"It is Pierre that reads it."

'"And you, do you not read?"

'"I read a great deal, on the contrary."

'Then she asked me what books I had read, and there she

was talking with me as if we were at the contredance. A little light came in by the open window; I saw her near me like a white shadow, and the wind played in her hair, which appeared to be untied. I had again become so timid that I could hardly answer her. I had felt more bold when she was flying from me; but when she began to question me, I felt my nothingness, I blushed for my ignorance, I feared to express myself poorly; I was so cowardly that I felt ashamed. It seemed to me that she must despise me. Still she did not go; her voice was entirely changed; and, while asking questions of me as of a child in whom she felt an interest, she seemed so agitated that I said to her, in order to change the conversation: "I am sure you must have hurt yourself in falling." I know very well that I ought to have said: "Madam the marchioness has hurt herself." I did not wish to say it; no, for nothing in the world would I have said it. "I did not hurt myselt," she replied, "but I was so frightened that my heart still beats. I thought it was one of the workmen running after me."

'These words surprised me very much. What did she mean? Am I not a workman also? Did she mean to flatter me by saying that she placed me apart, or was it a contemptuous idea that escaped in spite of her? Besides, she did recognise me very well, for she named me at once. She rose to go, and her dress caught upon a saw which was there. I was obliged to assist in disentangling it, and that silk dress which was so soft thrilled me to the tips of my fingers. I was like a child who holds a butterfly, and is afraid of spoiling its wings. Then she tried to find the step-ladder in order to regain the gallery, and I neither dared to follow her nor to go away. When she was on the first step, she uttered a slight cry, and I heard the boards creak. I thought she had fallen again, and in two bounds I was by her side. She laughed, even while she said she had bruised her foot, and she said also that she did not dare to mount for fear of falling. I proposed to go for a light.

'"Oh! no, no!" cried she. "No one must know that I am here." And she gathered courage to climb. I should have been very rude, should I not, if I had not helped her? She was really in danger, ascending in the dark that ladder, which would not be easy for a woman in broad daylight. I therefore went up with her, and she supported herself on me. And then at the last step she almost fell again, and I was obliged to hold her again in my arms. The danger past, she thanked me in a tone so gentle, and with so flattering a voice, that I felt agitated; and when she closed the door of the tower between us, I had something like a fit of madness. I rested my two arms on that door, as if I were about to burst

it in. But I fled immediately through the park, and I verily believe I have not recovered my whole reason since that day. Still, there are moments when all this appears to me otherwise. It seems to me she must be very coquettish to wish to turn the brain of a man she would not dare to love. This would be very cowardly; and if the marchioness has had such an idea, it would not be the action of a woman who respects herself. Answer me, then, Pierre, what do you think of it?'

'It is a very delicate question,' replied Pierre, whom this recital had troubled a great deal. 'Would not a woman so placed, who should seriously love a man of the people, be very great and very courageous? Of how many persecutions would she not be the object! And, in that affection, would she not, in some sort, be compelled to make the advances? For what man of the people would dare to love the first, and would not, like you, feel some distrust? Thus you see I cannot blame this lady if she does feel love for you. But I know not why I have little confidence in the truth of that love. This marchioness, being the daughter of a citizen, and able to choose among her equals, allowed herself to be married to a very miserable fellow, because he had a title. She debased herself by that marriage, thinking to remove more and more from the people of whom she was born.'

'Could not the answer be given to that,' said Amaury, 'that she was then a child, that she did not know what she was doing, that her parents advised her badly? And now, is it not possible that she has reflected seriously, that she has repented of her error, and that, having received a cruel lesson from destiny, she has returned to more noble sentiments?'

'Yes, that is possible,' replied Pierre. 'I like to hear, and try to believe all that can excuse and justify so unfortunate a woman. But of what consequence is it to us to know if she be sincere or a coquette? Could you entertain for a single moment the thought of replying to such advances? O, my friend, if a disproportionate, unrealizable love should take possession of you, be certain that your future would be compromised, and your soul in some sort stained. Beware, therefore, of dangerous dreams and of the sallies of your imagination. You know not how much we suffer when we once allow to pass before the pure mirror of reason certain deceitful phantoms which cannot become fixed in our life of poverty and privation.'

'You speak of these chimeras as if your firm and wise mind could know them,' replied Amaury, struck with the tone of bitterness with which his friend's words were accompanied.

'Have you then already seen an example of that disproportionate love which you condemn?'

'Yes, I have seen one,' answered Pierre, with emotion, 'and some day perhaps I will relate it to you; but it would be too painful at this moment; it is quite a fresh wound which has been made in the heart of an honest man. He did not deserve it, doubtless; but it will be salutary to him, and he thanks God for it.'

Amaury half understood that Pierre spoke of himself, and he did not dare question him further. But, after a few moments of silence, he could not help asking if the marchioness had anything to do with the example to which he referred.

'No, my friend,' replied Pierre; 'I think the marchioness better than the person of whom you compel me to think. But, whatever she may be, Amaury, do not imagine that this marchioness, without a husband, without a marriage tie, without prudence, and without power over herself, is a being as beautiful, as pure, and as precious before God as the noble Savinienne with her resignation, her firmness, her courage, her reputation without spot, and her maternal love. A robe of satin, small feet, soft hands, tresses arranged like those of a Greek statue, are, I confess, great attractions, for us especially, who only see these beauties so well adorned at a certain elevation above ourselves, as we see the richly dressed virgins in the churches. Beautiful words, an air of sovereign goodness, a mind more fine, more cultivated than our own, this also is enough to dazzle us and make us doubt if these women are of the same race as our mothers and our sisters: for the latter are placed under our protection, while we are as children in presence of the others. But, be certain, Amaury, our women have more heart and more real merit than these great ladies, who despise while they flatter us, and tread us under their feet while they extend the hand to us. They live in gold and silk. A man must present himself to them bedecked and perfumed like them; otherwise he is not a man. We, with our coarse clothes, our rough hands, and our disordered hair, we are machines, animals, beasts of labour; and she who could forget it for a moment would blush at us and at herself an instant afterwards.'

Pierre spoke with bitterness, and by degrees had raised his voice. Suddenly he interrupted himself, for it seemed to him that the foliage stirred behind him. The Corinthian was also struck by this mysterious rustling. He trembled lest the marchioness or some one of the maid-servants of the chateau had overheard his confidences. Another thought had come to Pierre; but he repelled and did not express it. He retained his friend, who wished to rush into the thicket in pursuit of the curious doe, and laughed at his folly. But their

suspicions were increased when, having advanced some steps, they saw a light and agile figure glide like a phantom under the branches of a little alley, and lose itself in the twilight.

They went under the oak in order to see what persons from the chateau had arrived before them. The marchioness had just come with her chambermaid Julia, a young brushed up turkey-feeder, as father Lacrete ironically called her, quite coquettish and tolerably pretty. The count de Villepreux was not there. Neither was his daughter. Still it might very well be she who had passed by the thicket at the moment when Pierre pronounced upon her, without naming her, a kind of imprecation. He knew that she studied botany, and he had sometimes seen her enter the coppice to gather mosses and creeping plants. But it might also have been the marchioness who had stolen there to listen to them. They felt some secret perplexity on this account, when the Corinthian, either to seek an opportunity to throw light upon this mystery, or drawn by an irresistible inclination, suddenly left his friend's arm, and went to ask Josephine to dance. Pierre could not help feeling pained at seeing the strength of this reciprocal attraction. He drew aside to observe them, and soon saw that a great danger threatened the Corinthian's reason and peace of mind. The marchioness appeared to him not less to be pitied. She seemed at once intoxicated and terrified. When the young sculptor was at her side, she saw no one but him; but, as soon as he withdrew, she ventured to cast around fearful glances full of confusion. 'She must love him a great deal,' said Pierre to himself, 'to come here, almost alone, and dance with these honest peasants, who certainly are only rustics in her eyes.' Pierre was deceived on this last point. Those rustics had eyes; they admired the brilliant freshness of Josephine Clicot, and the light grace of her motions. They said so to each other. The Corinthian heard their simple praises, and Josephine saw well that he did not hear them without emotion. She therefore desired to please all the dancers, in order to please the more him whom she preferred.

CHAPTER XXI.

PIERRE made vain efforts to tear the Corinthian from the dance. 'Let me exhaust this madness,' replied the young man to him. 'I assure you that I am still master of myself. Besides, it is the last time I will brave this danger. But look; there she is alone in the midst of all these villagers, some of whom are excited by wine. That little Julia is not a sufficient safeguard for her; and if it were for me, as you think, that she has taken the risk of coming into this somewhat brutal crowd, would it not be my duty to watch over and protect her? Come, Pierre, a woman is always a woman; and the support of a man, whoever he may be, is always necessary to her.'

L'Ami-du-trait was compelled to abandon the Corinthian to himself. He felt that he became more and more sad at the spectacle of that happiness full of perils and intoxication, which sadly awakened in him his hidden suffering. Then he asked himself if he had really a right to blame a weakness to which, in the secret of his thoughts, he had been so near yielding, and of which he could not, without falsehood, say that he was radically cured. He buried himself in the park, consumed by a strange anxiety.

He had wandered for some time at random, when he found himself, at the turn of an alley, not far from two persons who were walking in front of him. He recognised the dark dress and the rather peculiar voice of Mademoiselle de Villepreux. It was an elegant and pure tone, usually devoid of inflexions, and but little vibrating. This organ was in harmony with the whole appearance of her person. But who was the man that gave her his arm? He wore one of those cloaks then called *quiroga*, and a hat named *a la Morillo.* His firm step, as well as his costume, showed that it was not the count de Villepreux. Neither was it young Raoul: Pierre had just seen him pass in jacket and cap, with a gun, to kill rabbits on the spring. It might be a relative recently arrived at the chateau. Pierre continued to walk behind them at some distance. The obscurity of the alleys prevented his seeing them very clearly; but, when they passed an open space, he could see the animated gestures of the man in the quiroga. He spoke with earnestness, and some notes of a resounding voice, which seemed not unknown to Pierre Huguenin, reached him from time it time.

Perplexed and tormented, Pierre could not resist the desire of quickening his pace to hear them more nearly. But, as he passed through a dark place, he perceived, by the voices, that the promenaders were retracing their steps and approaching him nearer and nearer. He did not think he ought to avoid them, and soon, recalling his recollections, he recognised the voice, the gait, the quick and jerking tone of M. Achille Lefort, the patriotic recrutier.

As Achille passed quite near to Pierre, he pronounced these words with quite an animated accent :—

'No, certainly, I will not give up hope, and I am certain that M. the count—'

He interrupted himself on seeing Pierre walking in the side-alley.

Mademoiselle de Villepreux bent forward, lowering her head a little, in the attitude that one assumes in seeking to recognize a person in the darkness.

'Here,' said she, stopping, 'here is the very person you wished to meet. I leave you together.'

She disengaged her arm, returned to Pierre his silent salute, and wished to withdraw.

'In spite of all the pleasure I feel at meeting master Pierre,' said the travelling clerk, preparing to follow her, 'I cannot resolve to let you return alone to the chateau.'

'You forget that I am a country girl,' replied she, 'and that I am accustomed to do without an escort. I will go to my father, who must have finished his siesta. Till we meet again.'

Then she passed, as if intentionally, on the side opposite to Pierre, and took some steps running; but soon, repressing this impulse of a vivacity which was not natural to her, she withdrew with a light, but equal and measured, pace.

Pierre, quite confused at this double meeting, followed with his ear the slight noise of the sand which crackled under her feet, and did not hear the preamble by which Achille Lefort had opened the conversation. When he issued from this abstraction, he found that the good young man was saying to him the most obliging things in the world, and he reproached himself for answering with so much coldness. But, in spite of himself, on seeing him fall once again from the clouds, and present himself to his eye in the midst of an animated conversation with Yseult, he felt less sympathy for him than ever.

'Well! my fine fellow,' said Achille to him, 'have you already forgotten our joyous meeting at the Bower of wisdom? What a worthy man father Vaudois is! full of intelligence, of patriotism, of courage! Give me some news of the old jacobin locksmith, who so offended your old pupil the

captain! and of your dignitary, for whom I have as much respect and esteem as if I were his son! Tell me of all our friends! I don't ask you about the Corinthian: I have heard him spoken of at the chateau with such praises, that I should not be astonished to see him make a brilliant fortune at once. The whole family of Villepreux have their heads turned about him. They have already shown me his sculptures, and I am more charmed than surprised by them. I clearly perceived, on seeing him, that he was a great artist, a man of genius.'

'You testify an excess of benevolence which might be taken for irony,' replied Pierre, 'if I did not think I was not worth the trouble. Let us have a truce to all these compliments, and tell me, at once, if I can be of service to you, in this country, in any matter which concerns you personally. I do not think you have interrupted your promenade in order to talk with me about idle things; and as to politics, you know that I understand nothing about them.'

'You understand jesting wonderfully well, Master Pierre, and if I were a child, I might allow myself to be disconcerted. But I am accustomed to read consciences. I am a kind of father confessor, and I may say that I have confessed those who were more distrustful than you. You pretend that you know nothing about politics? Certainly, if you judge those which prevail at this day by the strange incoherencies we recently heard at our supper with the Vaudois, you must feel pity for us all. Still I hope that you do not entirely confound me with the others.'

'The others are your friends, your associates--I should say, *your accomplices*, if I were a royalist. How can you hold them so cheap with me, whom you do not know?'

'I know you very well, on the contrary. I did not seek to connect myself with you without studying your character, your sentiments, without having informed myself with the greatest detail respecting your conduct at Blois towards your brothers the gavots. I know that, in your meetings, you were a great orator, a great philosopher, a great politician even; and I could repeat to you, in part, the addresses by which you sought to deter them from the competition. Well! master Pierre, your lot there was the same that might be my own, if I were, as you suppose, associated in some political *devoir*. You found yourself alone in your opinion, alone with your good sense and your good intentions, in the midst of persons otherwise estimable and worthy of all your friendship, but full of errors, of prejudices, and opposing passions. This is my answer to what you said just now about my pretended accomplices.'

'Listen, sir,' said Pierre, after having remained silent

moment; 'what you say may be true. But if you wish me to converse with you, you must speak to me without reserve. You do not suppose me so simple as to have regarded your advances as a matter of pure sympathy between yourself and me. Praises have never turned my head. I do not ask of you the names of your associates; I suppose that you must be bound by certain promises, as we are in our societies. I wish to believe that the persons with whom you made me acquainted are unconnected with any plot. But I wish you to tell me what is your object,—your own, personally; for you either take me for a stupid fellow who will allow himself to be led blindfold (and, in that case, I must tell you that you are mistaken), or you know that I am incapable of acting the infamous part of an informer, and, in that case, you must not speak to me in riddles. I should not have time to seek for their solution.'

'So be it, my fine fellow! I will speak as clearly as you wish. I do not ask you if you are secure from a moment of forgetfulness and trifling which might compromise my liberty and life; I am satisfied of this beforehand, knowing that you are the most serious, and, perhaps, the most delicate man in existence. [illegible], where I risk only my head, I am not accustomed to [illegible] my duty from prudence. What do you wish to know?'

'Your real object, sir; your principles, your political faith. I do not ask of you an account of the means by which you serve your cause—I know that you cannot reveal them; but I wish to know your object: without that you will not move me more than a mountain.'

'Faith transports mountains, my worthy comrade. I am, therefore, sure of moving you, for my faith is yours: I am a republican.'

'What do you mean by that?'

'Strange question!—what you yourself mean!'

'But what do I mean, do you know?'

'I presume; and, besides, you will tell me.'

'Not so; I shall wait for you to tell me your plan of a republic, for I am certain you have one, otherwise you would not have set to work; while I, who do nothing else from morning to night but saw boards and plane them, may never have thought of remodelling society.'

'You question me in rather an insidious manner, my good friend, observe that. If we agree at the bottom, we can understand each other by mutual revelations. If we do not, you preserve the right to counteract my projects, while I have no hold upon yours.'

'That is true, since, for myself, I have no projects. What shall we do, then? If I tell you my ideas, and you wish to

make use of me, you will be free to reply to me that they are exactly your own.'

'I will say what you said to me at first: either you have confidence in me, or—'

'But why, then, should I have confidence in you? Did I seek you? Was I thinking of you when you accosted me on the bank of the Loire? Was I searching for the republic just now, when you stopped me in this alley? Do I insist, at this moment, on being initiated into your secrets? Do you want anything of me, or do you not? Speak or be silent.'

'You have a pitiless logic, and I see that I have to do with a strong mind. Well! I will speak; for, otherwise, the debate would become comic, and, to finish it according to our mutual pretensions, we should have to talk both together, which would not help us to understand each other. I begin: we have pronounced the word republic; and at once we are stopped. What is the republic? is it that of Plato? is it that of Jesus Christ? is it that of ancient Rome, or of ancient Sparta? Is it that of the Thirteen Cantons? is it that of the United States? In fine, is it that of the French Revolution, in which we can count fifteen or twenty forms of republic by turns tried, laid aside, and overthrown?'

Here Achille Lefort stopped to breathe. The good young man was somewhat embarrassed for the definition he was required to give, and he hoped to bewilder his adversary by the power of learning; but Pierre followed him very well, and nothing that he heard was strange to him.

'It is not, certainly, either of those forms which you have adopted,' replied he. 'You have too much judgment not to know that the republic of Plato, as well as those of Rome and Sparta, is impossible without helots, that of the Thirteen Cantons impossible without mountains, that of the United States without the slavery of the blacks, and that all those of our revolution are impossible without jailors and executioners. There remains, then, that of Jesus Christ, respecting which I should not be sorry to have your opinion.'

'That would, perhaps, be the most popular, if we understood the gospel,' replied Lefort; 'but that also is impossible without priests. Thus all have for us a major objection, and we must find a new one.'

'That is the point,' said Pierre, seating himself upon the side of a ditch, and folding his arms. And he said to himself: 'Now I shall learn if this be a wise man or a fool.'

Achille Lefort was neither the one nor the other. He was the man of his time, one of the thousands of brave youths, enterprising, devoted, but ignorant and rash, whom France then saw spring from her labouring side. Influenced by a

single patriotic idea, that of expelling the Bourbons and bringing back the institutions to a more sincere liberalism, those courageous young men went forward at random, not caring to form theories immediately applicable, seeing nothing but the fact, which they decorated in those times with the name of principle (not really knowing what a principle is), and obeying, nevertheless, that law of progress which drew all their numbers pell-mell, each with his little provision of scholastic philosophy and political passion: Voltaire, Adam Smith, Bentham; the constituent, the convention, the charter; Bissot, Lafayette, the duke of Orleans, *e tutti quanti*. These young men had been led, in order to increase their numbers, to the idea of initiating into the secret societies the malcontents of the imperial party, a phalanx heroic in heart and limited in mind, who rather played the part of Bertrand in the fable of the chestnuts, and who avenge themselves at this day by turning the cannons and muskets of the restraining order against the revolutionizing republic. There was, therefore, at that time, an inevitable exchange of little tricks, of fallacious promises, and of transactions which may be called rather jesuitical, between the conspirators of different opinions and different shades. All was done with good intentions; and, if it is permitted now to jest upon those episodes, we must not forget to make allowance for the laughing finesse and the good-natured rashness of the French character.*

Achille Lefort, driven to the wall by the firm mind, the virgin conscience and the ardent thirst for truth which impelled the man of the people to know the word of the future, escaped from the contest as skilfully as he could; and in spite of the implacable good sense of Pierre Huguenin, who also did not want finesse, succeeded in disengaging himself from his point without much damage or shame. Even while pretending to interrogate himself conscientiously (and the opportunity

* Every historical period has two faces: one very poor, very ridiculous, or very unhappy, which is turned towards the calendar of the time; the other, great, efficacious, serious, which looks towards that of eternity. We cannot better develope this thought, applied to the events to which we here refer, than by quoting a passage of M. Jean Reynaud upon carbonarism. If any one should accuse us of not treating with sufficient respect attempts which had their tragical periods and their crowned martyrs, we invoke this beautiful passage as the expression of our sympathy and of our final judgment:—"Alas! those plots cost us blood, and of the purest. It was necessary that generous hearts should be prematurely condemned to the exile of the tomb, and that noble heads, offered up in holocaust, should bend sorrowfully beneath the heavy hand of the executioner. Their sacrifice has not been useless to the world; and posterity, in its commemoration of the dead, will preserve their names. No, your blood, O unfortunate patriots, has not been shed in vain; since it has inspired

being a good one, Achille Lefort played this game seriously), he insensibly led Pierre to tell him his repugnances, his sympathies, his wishes, and to bring to light a world of questions which the mechanic had asked himself, and which had remained without answer, but which were not the less great questions, alone worthy of a great heart which desires, and of a great mind which searches. These lightnings which shot from his soul threw their light upon that of the young carbonaro. That brave youth, full of defects, of self-sufficiency, of bad taste and presumption, had none the less one of the purest consciences that could be found. His brain, full of enthusiasm and greedy of emotions, was kindled by the contact of that obscure man, who raised before him more fundamental problems than he had met upon his path since he had been in the world. He understood that here was something great; and his charlatanism of friendship for the adept whom he wished to secure was changed into a real affection, into a boundless confidence.

On his side, Pierre saw very well that if this was not the philosopher who could solve his questions, his was at least a good and generous nature. He saw also his errors and dared to tell him of them. Achille did not dare to be offended. He bent under the superiority of the mechanic, still without inwardly acknowledging it; his self-love prevented him: and even while declaring to him that he looked upon him as his master, even while recognising him as such in his conscience, upon certain points, he still sought to dazzle him by his demonstrations of moral power, and his display of civic virtue.

Their conversation was prolonged so late, that the fiddlers had departed, the village had gone to bed, the lights of the chateau had successively disappeared, and two in the morning sounded from the great clock, before they thought of separating. They promised to meet again next day. Achille took the path to the chateau, and Pierre accompanied him as far as the door of a tower in which his apartment was prepared.

all the friends of mankind with the desire to die with the same grandeur and for the same cause as you; it has raised a testimony against monarchies, in the day when monarchies were powerful, and when those who were supposed to represent France bowed themselves before them; it has marked in our annals with an ineffaceable sign, revolution re-appearing in the bosom of the people at the same instant with the sceptre in the hands of monarchs; it has gone, as a tribute of our age, to mingle with those sacred rivers formed of the blood of our fathers, and which, under our first republic, watered our national frontier with an impassable enclosure; and if there has been any glory in carbonarism, O Borie, Raoulx, Goubin, Pommier, Vallée, Caron, Berton, Caffé, Saugé, Jaglin, that glory is concentrated entirely upon you, who alone appeared in the light of heaven, in order to fall under the cleaver of kings."

It was only then that he gathered courage to ask him under what title, and upon what footing he was in the family de Villepreux.

'I have known the Villepreux for a long time,' replied Achille, with that familiar tone which belonged to him; 'I have business with the old man.'

'And your acquaintance was made as between a man who buys wine and one who sells? Do you really sell wine then?'

'Without doubt! whence otherwise could I obtain my passport to enter everywhere, and my safety in travelling without bringing the police on my track? I sell wines, and of every quality. With Sherry and Malvoisie, I enter the chateaus; with brandy and rum the cafés, and even the village wineshops. How did I form an acquaintance with the Vaudois?'

'I do not ask you that. Have you been long accustomed to visit this chateau?'

'Five or six years; I first stocked the cellar.'

'And at Paris, do you preserve your connexion with the family of Villepreux.'

'Certainly. Does not that seem natural to you?'

'Oh! Mon Dieu! yes,' replied Pierre, with a little irony; 'it is not necessary to invent any more.'

'How, invent? What do you mean? Would you suppose that I could have any political connexion with the old lord? That would be very improbable, and besides you would not wish to question me upon a point in which I alone was not concerned.'

'I did not even think of it. Seeing you very much at your ease with the young lady of the chateau—'

'Well, well, conclude! what did you suppose? She has mind, the little Yseult, has she not? She told me that she had talked with you, and I don't know all the good she said of you in three short and clear words, according to her custom. Queer girl! do you think her pretty?'

This manner of defining and analysing the person of whom Pierre could not think without trembling, caused such a revolution in him that he remained for some moments without the power of answering. At last, as Achille insisted singularly, he replied that he had not looked at her.

'Well, look at her,' returned Achille, 'and afterwards I will tell you something.'

'You had better tell me at once, in order that I may remember to look at her,' replied Pierre, whose curiosity was vividly and painfully excited, but who did not wish to permit it to appear.

Achille took his arm, and, withdrawing from the chateau, led him to some distance with an air of merry mystery which

made Pierre Huguenin suffer a thousand tortures. When they were at a sufficient distance :

'You have never heard anything about her?' said Achille, in a low voice.

'Nothing at all,' replied Pierre; and, as he feared the other might not wish to continue his prating, he immediately added, to set him off again: 'Ah! yes; I have been told that she had a great passion in her heart for a young man whom they would not let her marry.'

'Ah! bah! really?' cried Achille. 'I never heard of that; it may be possible—why not? But I know nothing about it.'

'What have you to tell me then?'

'Something very particular. Do you know whose daughter people say she is?'

'I do not know."

'The emperor of Napoleon's, neither more nor less.'

'How could that be?'

'Very naturally. Her father, the old count's son, married a young lady attached to the empress Josephine's household; so that the first child of that marriage, if the chronicle is to be believed, might be born a little earlier than was correct, and could have in the lines of her profile a softened resemblance to the Corsican eagle. How does it seem to you?'

'Nothing; I never remarked that. Still, the hauteur of her character would make me believe she might well have the blood of some despot in her veins?'

'Is she disdainful or mocking?'

'I ask you: you know her very well, and I not the least in the world. In my position with regard to her, I cannot—'

'But is she considered disdainful here?'

'Rather.'

'And you—how does she seem to you?'

'Peculiar.'

'Yes, peculiar, is she not? of a fantastic seriousness, of an enigmatical good sense; cold, proud; the very nature of a princess.'

'You have studied her a great deal!—'

'I! I have not taken the trouble. Look you, my dear, I have no time to dance attendance on a woman. The life I lead compels me never to bestow much attention on those who do nothing to attract me. The daughter of Napoleon is not worth a pipe of tobacco for me, if, instead of pleasing, she tries to dazzle me. There is a little person here who would turn my head if I permitted it. That is the delightful marchioness. But, the devil! I shall be obliged to leave in a week. It is best to let her alone, is it not? You, who are virtuous—'

'You—you are a coxcomb,' said Pierre, in a firm tone, the frankness of which made the travelling clerk burst into a loud laugh.

This kind of frivolous conversation was by no means to the taste of the grave and impassioned artisan. He definitively bade good night to his new friend, and took the road to the village across the park.

But it was impossible for him to effect his exit. The park was closed on all sides. It was not absolutely difficult to climb over the wall; but Pierre felt himself seized with such a nonchalance of mind, that it was almost indifferent to him whether he passed the night in the park or in his bed. He there had, in the event of a storm (the weather was threatening), the resource of sheltering himself in the workshop, a key of which he always had with him. Feeling led, by this unaccustomed languor, rather to revery than to sleep, he buried himself in the thickest of the wood, and continued to wander slowly, sometimes seating himself on the moss to relieve the weariness of his legs, sometimes resuming his walk in obedience to the uneasiness of his mind.

CHAPTER XXII.

At first his revery was vague and melancholy. The last impression under which he had remained on leaving Achille Lefort was that discovery, or that fable, of Mademoiselle de Villepreux's illustrious illegitimacy. Pierre could not help going over in his head all the romances he had read, and he found none among them so strange as that which he had made in the secret of his heart, he, enamoured and almost jealous of the daughter of Cæsar.

'Singular destiny for her,' said he to himself, 'if she be and if she feel herself in any degree cut from the side of the colossus, to find herself placed between a mechanic who dares to admire her, and a travelling clerk who permits himself to disdain her. How her pride would suffer, if what passes about her could be revealed to her.'

And yet the words he had heard from the mouth of Achille, at the moment when his conversation with Mademoiselle de Villepreux was broken off, returned to give him anxiety. 'Perhaps he is more crafty than he seems?' said he to himself; 'perhaps it is he whom she loves, and against the wishes of her family? perhaps he pretends not to care for her in order to conceal his happiness?' And immediately Pierre found a

thousand good reasons to persuade himself that it was so. But by what right did he seek to penetrate a secret which might be serious and worthy of respect? 'If,' said he to himself, 'she did love a man without birth and without fortune, as he declares himself to be, would it not be a very delicate and very romantic thing, this semblance of pride, this reserve with all the world, this air of indifference for all that is not he? Ought I not to forgive her the evil she has done me, without intending it, without knowing it perhaps?' And, even while compelling himself to be interested in the presumed happiness of Achille Lefort, Pierre felt that he was ill and despairing. It was during this night of sleeplessness and torment that he at last confessed to himself that he loved passionately, and had full consciousness of his madness.

Still the terror which he felt at this discovery was soon dissipated. As happens in great crises where the clear view of danger reanimates our strength and reawakens our prudence, he felt return to him by degrees the will and the power to struggle against the chimera of his imagination. He resolved to drive away this vain phantom, and to turn his thoughts to the more serious subjects on which he had conversed with Achille during the whole evening.

He succeeded in becoming absorbed with these new reflections; but he only changed his suffering. There was such a vagueness in the brain of the carbonaro, that he had left only incoherence and confusion in that of his neophyte. The eagerness of mind with which Pierre endeavoured to unravel something in the chaos of theories which Achille had shuffled before him like a pack of cards, gave him a kind of fever. His ideas became obscured; the discomfort which nature seems to experience at the approach of day passed into him; and he threw himself at full length upon the moss, oppressed, overpowered, and receiving, as a shock in his whole being, the deep and exquisite sorrows of René and Childe Harold, to which the law of the ages initiated him,—him a simple workman, without more reserve than if society had formed him for sufferings of the mind, instead of destining him exclusively to those of the body.

When day appeared, and a feeble light spread over the objects about him, he felt, if not solaced, at least more gently moved. The storm had passed over; the dry and heavy atmosphere was moistened with the freshness of morning, and the breezes of the dawn seemed to sweep away the cares of night. Natures formed in the robust sphere of the people live much by the senses, and this power is a perfecting of the being when united with that of intelligence. The absence of brightness during quite a long succession of hours, had contributed much to Pierre's sadness. When light spread

over nature, he felt himself born again, and admired, with a kind of artist's transport, that beautiful park, those immense trees in their foliage and freshness, that smooth grass, green in the middle of summer as in the first days of spring, those paths without stones and without thorns, all that well tended, luxurious, and ornamented nature of our modern gardens.

But his admiration recalled him by degrees to the problem which had besieged him during the whole night.

He had read, in the philosophers and in the poets of the last century, that the *cabin of the labourer*, the meadow *enamelled with flowers*, and the field covered with gleaners, were much more beautiful than the flower beds, the straight alleys, the trimmed bushes, the combed grass, and the basins ornamented with statues, which surround the *palace of the great;* and he had allowed himself to believe it, for this idea pleased him then. But, compelled to traverse France, on foot and in all seasons, he had found that this *nature* so much praised in the eighteenth century really existed nowhere, upon a soil infinitely divided and unworthily tortured by individual necessities. If, from the summit of a hill, he had contemplated with delight a certain extent of country, the reason was that, in the distance, that division is effaced and confounded to the view; the masses recover their appearance of grandeur and harmony; the beautiful primitive forms of the region, the rich colour of the vegetation which man cannot destroy, overpower and conceal at a distance the miserable mutilation they have undergone. But on approaching these details, on penetrating these perspectives, our traveller had always experienced a complete disenchantment: that which, from afar, had the aspect of a virgin forest, near at hand was only a succession of trees unskilfully planted upon the awkward margins of enclosures. Those trees themselves were stripped of their most beautiful branches, and had no form. The picturesque huts were dirty, surrounded by pools of stagnant water, deprived of natural shelter against the wind or the sun. Nothing was in its place. The house of the rich man destroyed the simplicity of the country; the cabin of the poor man took from the chateau all characters of isolation and grandeur. The finest field often wanted grass and freshness, for want of a thread of water which the occupier had not the right or the means of borrowing from the neighbouring stream. No harmony, no taste, and, above all, no real fertility. Everywhere the soil, given up to ignorance or cupidity, was exhausted without yielding abundance, or, indeed, abandoned to the poor man's want of means, was burnt up in a yearly drought. And for the traveller, not a path which he was not obliged to seek and secure in some

manner by his memory or by the agility of his body; for everything is closed, everything is forbidden, everything bristles with thorns, and is surrounded by ditches and palisades. The least corner of soil is a fortress, and the law makes a trespass of each step risked by a man upon the jealous and savage property of another man. 'This, then, is nature, as we have made it,' thought Pierre Huguenin, when he traversed these deserts created by mankind. 'Would God recognize his work? Is this the beautiful terrestrial paradise which he has intrusted to us to embellish and extend from horizon to horizon, over the whole of the globe?'

Sometimes he had crossed mountains, skirted torrents, wandered in thick woods. There only where nature preserves herself rebellious to the invasion of man by resisting cultivation, has she retained her strength and beauty. 'Whence is it, then,' said he to himself, 'that the hand of man is cursed, and that, there only where it does not govern, the earth recovers its luxury and is clothed with its grandeur? Is labour, then, contrary to the divine laws, or is it indeed the law to labour in sorrow, and to be able to create only ugliness and poverty, to dry up instead of producing, to destroy instead of building? Is this very truly then the valley of tears of which Christians speak, and have we been cast into it to expiate crimes anterior to this fatal life?'

Pierre Huguenin had often lost himself in these bitter thoughts, and he had not been able to find a solution. For, if large properties are the best preservers of nature, if they effect with more breadth and science the work of human labour, they are none the less a monstrous injury to the imperishable right of humanity. They dispose of the domain of all to the profit of a few; they insolently devour the life of the weak and of the disinherited, who cry in vain to heaven for vengeance. 'And yet,' said he to himself, 'the more we divide, the more the soil perishes; the more we assure the existence of each of its members, the more the whole of humanity languishes and suffers. Chateaus have been razed, wheat has been sown in the signoral parks; each one has taken for himself a shred of the spoil, and has thought himself saved. But from beneath each stone has come a swarm of hungry poor, and the earth is now too small. The rich are ruined and disappear in vain. The more the bread is broken, the more hands are stretched forth to receive it, and the miracle of Jesus is no longer worked: no one is satisfied; the soil dries up, and man with the soil. In vain does industry display marvellous strength; it excites necessities which it cannot satisfy; it bestows delights in which the human family cannot share without imposing on itself, at other points, privations until then unknown. Work is everywhere created,

and everywhere misery increases. It seems as if we have the right to regret feudal times, which fed the slave without exhausting him, and which, preserving him from the torments of a vain hope, sheltered him at least from despair and suicide.

These contradictory reflections, these sad uncertainties, returned to Pierre in proportion as he saw the beauties of the signoral park of Villepreux revealed by the morning light. In spite of himself he compared the care and intelligence which had prevailed in the arrangement of this nature to the effect of education upon the character and mind of man. By cutting in the useless branches of those trees, there had been given to them the gracefulness, the health and the majestic stature which is secured to them by the climate in more favourable regions than our own. By frequently mowing and incessantly watering that turf, there had been given to it the admirable freshness which it receives from the fall of abundant waters upon the mountain slopes. Flowers and fruits of different regions had been there acclimated by a proper allowance of air, of light, or shade. It was a factitious nature, but one studied with art to resemble free nature without losing those conditions of well-being, of protection, of order and of charm, which it must have in order to serve as a sphere and a shelter for civilized humanity. There was found all the beauty of God's work, and there was felt the hand of man, governing with love, preserving with discernment. Pierre agreed within himself that, in our climate, nothing more resembles the true divine creation—Nature, in one word, such as it has been defined by the philosophers who have taken that word Nature for their banner, than a garden cultivated in this manner; while nothing is so far removed from it as the cultivation made necessary by territorial division and the parcelling out of small properties. In quite large and constantly stirred clearings grain was sowed, the strength and abundance of which had been increased ten-fold by the richness of the cultivation. The game, protected by the wise foresight of the master, was sufficiently abundant to furnish his table without compromising the products of the soil. This was therefore truly the idealization and not the mutilation of nature. It was production well understood, properly divided, and sufficiently assisted. It was the *utile dulci* of partrician life, which should be the normal life of all polished men.

It was therefore necessary to reocgnize the fact that this was the abode and the property of a family which lived there simply, nobly, and in a manner entirely conformable to providential laws. And yet no poor man could, or would, look up-

on it without hatred and without envy; and if the law of force did not protect the rich, there is no poor man who would not consider and would not feel that the violation of that abode and the pillage of that property were legitimate acts. How then to reconcile these two principles: the right of the happy man to the preservation of his happiness, the right of the miserable man to the cessation of his misery?

Both seem equally the children of God, his representatives upon the earth, the agents whom he has invested with universal property and cultivation. That rich old man, who rests his white head, and who educates his children under the shadow of the trees he has planted, would it not be a crime to tear him from his domain and cast him naked and a beggar upon the highway? and yet that beggar, old also, also the father of a family, who extends his hand for charity at the gate of the rich man, is it not also a crime to let him perish with cold, hunger, and sorrow upon the highway?

Shall we say that this rich man has enjoyed his fortune long enough, and that it is the turn of the poor man to take his place at the banquet of life? Would this tardy enjoyment efface in the poor man the trace of the long privations he has undergone? Could it cancel for him the debt of the past, compensate him for the evils he has suffered, and repair the disorders which misfortune has inflicted upon his understanding?

Shall we say that this poor man has endured enough of suffering, and that it is the turn of the rich man to yield to him his place at the banquet of life? Because the rich man has enjoyed the gifts of God until this day, does it follow that he ought to be violently torn from them, and condemned to misery? Does this necessity of enjoyment, which the Eternal has placed in the heart of man as a right, and doubtless as a duty, constitute a crime for which he should be punished, and which other men have a right to make him expiate?

Besides, if the poor man has a right to happiness, this rich man whom you will have made poor will immediately have the right to claim his share of happiness, and the right of the now rich man will be founded, like that of his predecessor, upon will and power. It will therefore be necessary to stifle the complaint and the rebellion of this new poor man by war, and the only possible end of such a war will be the extermination of the dispossessed rich man. Accept this savage solution: the earth is as yet swept by only a small minority, it remains still overcharged with a multitude of individual necessities which it cannot satisfy on the same conditions as those hitherto imposed. Those whom the pillage will have enriched, and this will still be a minority, will hear groan and blaspheme at their gates those who have gained nothing by the conquest,

and these will still be the most numerous. You will repress them by force for a short time; but they will multiply like kernels of wheat, they will increase like the waves of the sea; and each generation will therefore change masters without seeing close the yawning, unfathomable abyss, whence will issue without ceasing the voice of suffering humanity, a long cry of despair, of malediction, of insult, and of threat! Must we therefore abandon ourselves upon this fatal declivity, where punishments succeed to punishments, disasters to disasters, victims to victims? or must we indeed leave things as they are, perpetuate the iniquity of exclusive right, of unequal distribution, place a privileged caste upon immoveable thrones, and condemn the nations to misery, the scaffold, or the gallies?

Let us return therefore to the division of which our fathers dreamed. The earth was divided by them; let us divide it still more; our children will divide it infinitely, for they will still multiply, and each generation will demand a new division, which will always reduce still more the narrow domain of their ancestors, and the inheritance of their descendants. The time will be, then, when each man will be the owner of a grain of sand, unless famine and all the causes of destruction engendered by barbarism shall seasonably come, in each generation, to decimate the population. And, as barbarism is the inevitable result of division and absolute individualism, the future of humanity rests upon the plague, war, inundations, all the scourges which will tend to bring back the infancy of the world, the sparseness of the human race, the wild empire of nature, the dissemination and brutishness of savage life. More than one brain of the nineteenth century, not considered ferocious or deranged, has arrived at this absurd and anti-human conclusion, for want of finding a better, whether starting from the social or from the individual point of view.

In the midst of all these hypotheses, the brave Pierre, unable to contemplate either without fear and without horror, was seized by a fit of despair. He forgot the hour which advanced and the sun which, rising above the horizon, measured out to him his task of labour. He fell with his face to the ground, and wrung his hands while he shed torrents of tears.

He had been there a long while when, on raising his head to look at heaven with anguish, he saw before him an apparition which, in his delirum, he took for the genius of the earth. It was an ærial figure, whose light steps hardly bowed the grass, and whose arms were laden with a sheaf of the most beautiful flowers. He rose suddenly, and Yseult, for it was she who was peacefully gathering her poetical morning harvest, let fall her basket, and stood before him, pale, stupified, and entirely surrounded by the flowers which covered the

turf at her feet. On recovering his reason and recognizing her who had done him so much harm, Pierre wished to fly but Yseult placed upon his hand a hand cold as the morning, and said to him in an agitated voice:

You are very ill, sir, or you have met with some great misfortune. Tell me what has happened to you, or come and confide it to my father; he will endeavour to remedy it. He will give you good advice, and his friendship may perhaps do you good.'

'Your friendship, madam!' cried Pierre, still wandering, and in a bitter tone, 'is friendship possible between you and me?'

'I do not speak to you of myself,' said Mademoiselle de Villepreux sadly; 'I have no right to offer you my interest. I know very well that you would not accept it.'

'But whom have I told that I am unhappy?' cried Pierre with a kind of delirium which confusion and pride dissipated by degrees. 'Am I unhappy?'

'Your face is still covered with tears, and it was the sound of your sobs that drew me towards you.'

'You are good, mademoiselle, very good, in truth! But there is a world between us. M. your father, whom I respect with my whole soul, would not understand me any better. If I had incurred debts, he could pay them; if I wanted bread or work, he could procure both for me; if I were ill or wounded, I know that your noble hands would not disdain to succour me. But if I had lost my father, your's could not fill his place for me.'

'O mon Dieu!' cried Yseult, with a sympathy of which Pierre would have never thought her capable, 'is father Huguenin dead? O poor, poor son, how I pity you!'

'No, my dear young lady,' replied Pierre, with simplicity and gentleness; 'my father is well, thanks to the good God. I merely wished to say that if I had lost a friend, a brother, your worthy father could not replace him.'

'Well, you are mistaken, master Pierre. My father might become your best friend. You do not know him; you do not know that my father is devoid of prejudice, and that, wherever he meets with merit, with elevation of feelings and ideas, there he recognizes his equal. I wish you could hear him speak of you and your friend the sculptor: you would no longer feel that distrust and aversion towards our class which I now divine in you, and which afflicts me more than you can imagine.'

Pierre would have had many things to answer under other circumstances; but this agitating meeting and these remarks of interest at a moment when his heart was broken with grief, were a diversion which he had not strength to repeal, a

balm the sweetness of which he felt penetrate his soul in spite of himself. Weakened by his tears, and almost terrified by Yseult's goodness, he supported himself against a tree, tottering and overpowered. She still stood before him, ready to withdraw as soon as she could see him calm, but unable to resolve to leave him after a bitter word. And, as she saw him with his eyes cast down, his chest still swelling, in the attitude of a man overcome with fatigue who has not strength to resume his burden and walk, she added to what she had said:

'I see that you are made very unhappy and, one would say, almost humiliated by my sympathy. This perhaps is my fault, and I fear I have deserved what happens to me.'

Pierre, astonished at these words, raised his eyes, and saw her become pale and red by turns, suffering from an inward struggle to which her pride made earnest resistance. Nevertheless, there was so much nobleness and courage in the expression of her repentance, that Pierre felt all his resentment disappear; but he wished to be sincere.

'I understand you, mademoiselle,' said he with that confidence which the feeling of his dignity always restored to him. 'It is very true that you uselessly wounded an already suffering soul. It was not necessary to remind me of the respect I owe you, and your reply to Madame des Frenays did not persuade me that I was not a human creature. No, no! the artisan and the wood he fashions with his hands are not absolutely the same thing. You were not *alone* the other day, for you were with a being who understood your affable goodness and prostrated himself before it. But I swear to you that this painful recollection had nothing to do with the attack of grief and madness in which you surprised me.'

'And now,' said Yseult, 'can you forgive me for a fault which nothing can justify?'

Pierre, conquered by so much humility, looked at her again. She stood before him with her hands clasped, her head bowed, and two large tears rolled down her cheeks. He rose, seized with a generous transport. 'Oh! may God love and bless you, as I esteem and absolve you!' cried he, raising his hands above the bent head of the young girl. 'But it is too much, too much at once!' added he, falling on his knees and closing his eyes.

In fact, too many emotions had prostrated him. Yseult could not imagine the fanaticism of virtue and the exaltation of love which fermented together in that enthusiastic soul. She uttered a cry on seeing him become pale as the lilies of her basket, and fall at her feet, suffocated, drunk with joy and terror, fainting at first and soon the victim of a nervous

crisis which drew from him stifled cries and fresh torrents of tears.

When he returned to himself, he saw at some steps from him, Mademoiselle de Villepreux even more pale than he was, terrified and dismayed at the same time, ready to run and call assistance, but chained to the spot, doubtless by the hope of being more directly useful to that suffering soul by moral consolations, than by material cares. Ashamed of the weakness he had shown, Pierre besought her, as soon as he could speak, to think no more of him; but she remained and did not answer. Her face had an expression of profound sadness, her look was almost gloomy.

'You are very unhappy!' she repeated several times, 'and I can do you no good?'

'No, no! you cannot,' replied Pierre.

Then Yseult made a step towards him; and after some moments of hesitation, while he wiped his face bathed in sweat and tears:

'Master Huguenin,' said she to him, 'on your soul and conscience, do you think you ought not to tell me the occasion of your tears? If you reply that you ought not, I will not question you further.'

'I swear to you, upon my honour, that I weep at present without any real cause, as it seems to me. I really do not know why I feel myself so cast down, and it would be impossible for me to explain it to you.'

'But just now,' resumed Yseult, with effort, 'when I surprised you in the same state into which you have again fallen, what was the matter? Is it then a secret that you could not confide to me?'

'I could do so, and you would see that my thoughts are not unworthy of your attention likewise.'

'But would you not be willing to confide those thoughts to my father?'

'I could speak them aloud and before the whole world; but I do not know if there would be in the whole world a single man who could reply to them.'

'For myself, I believe that man lives, and that it is he of whom I speak to you. He is the most just, the most enlightened, and the best whom I know; you must consider it quite natural in me to recommend him to you. Listen: in two hours he will come and take his seat under that linden which you see there, at the garden gate. He comes there every day in fine weather to breakfast, read his newspapers, and talk with me. Will you come and talk also? If I disturb you, I will leave you alone with him?'

'Thanks! thanks!' replied Pierre. 'You wish to do me good; you are charitable, as I know. I know also that your

father is learned, that he is wise and generous; but I am perhaps too crazy and too ill to free my mind from a cruel anxiety. Besides, I have a better counsellor; I interrogate him often, and I hope that he will at last reply to me. That counsellor is God!'

'May he assist you!' replied Yseult; 'I will pray to him for you.'

And she departed, after having timidly saluted him; but, while retiring, she stopped and turned several times in order to assure herself that he did not again fall into delirium. Pierre, seeing this delicate and frank solicitude, rose to reassure her, and took the road to the workshop. But, as soon as he saw Yseult re-enter the chateau by another door, he returned and gathered some of the flowers she had left upon the grass. He hid them in his bosom like relics, and went to resume his work. But he had no strength. Besides that he was fasting, having no desire nor courage to go to breakfast; he was bruised in all his bones; and if the intoxication of an irresistible love had not come to sustain him, he would have deserted the workshop.

'What is the matter with you?' asked father Huguenin, who remarked the alteration of his features, and the languidness of his labour. 'You are ill; you must go and rest.'

'Father,' replied poor Pierre, 'I have no more courage to-day than a woman, and I work like a slave. Let me sleep a little while on the shavings, and perhaps I shall be better when you wake me.'

Amaury, the Berrichon, and the apprentices made a bed for him of their vests and blouses, promising to make up for his time, and he fell asleep to the sound of the saw and hammer, which was too familiar to him to interrupt his slumber.

CHAPTER XXIII.

There are very simple circumstances which are connected, in the remembrance of each one of us, with crises in our intellectual life, with transformations of our moral being; and, however subject our existence may be to the coldest reality, there is no one of us who has not had his hour of ecstasy and revelation, in which his soul has been retempered, and in which his future destiny has been unveiled as by a miracle. This inward world which we bear within us is full of mysteric and profound oracles. We read therein more or less vaguely, but there is always an epoch, an hour, an instant, perhaps, in which, it may be from faith in God, it may be from meditation upon social matters, it may be from love, a divine brightness penetrates like lightning the darkness of the understanding. In elevated and contemplative natures, this crisis is solemn, and recurs, in all the great phases of their destiny, it places a decided limit between the distresses of yesterday and the attainments of to-morrow. The metaphysician and the geometrician, lost in the search after abstractions, have their sudden and marvellous revelations, as well as the religious fanatic as well as the lover and the poet. Why should not the man of charity and devotedness, whose heart and brain labours to discover the truth, be assisted in his task by that Spirit of the *Lord* which, in reality, hovers over all souls, piercing with its divine fire the vault of dungeons and of cells, the roofs of workshops and of garrets, as well as the dome of palaces and of temples?

Pierre Huguenin remembered all his life with a profound emotion that hour of slumber upon the shavings of the workshop. And yet nothing extraordinary took place around him. The plane and the chisel travelled victoriously as usual over the rebellious and plaintive wood. The workmen covered their muscular arms with sweat, and the consoling song circulated, regulating by its rhythm the action of their labour, evoking poetry in the midst of fatigue and contention of mind. But, while these things followed their natural course, the heavens opened above the head of the proletary apostle, and his soul took its flight towards the regions of the ideal world. He had a strange dream. It seemed to him that he was lying, not upon shavings, but upon flowers. And those flowers grew, opened, became more and more sweet and magnificent, and mounted blooming towards heaven. Soon they were

gigantic trees which perfumed the air, and, scaling in an abyss of verdure, attained the splendours of the empyrean. The mind of the sleeper, borne by the flowers, ascended like them towards heaven, and rose, happy and powerful, with this vegetation without repose and without limit. At last he reached a height whence he discovered the whole face of a new earth; and that earth was, like the path which had led him hither, an ocean of verdure, of fruits, and of flowers. All that which Pierre, a traveller upon the earth of mankind, had found most poetical in the sublime mountains and in the smiling vallies, was collected there, but with more variety, richness and grandeur. Abundant waters, pure as crystal, flowed from all the heights, ran and crossed each other [illegible] upon all the slopes and in all the depths. Buildings of an elegant architecture, admirable monuments, adorned with masterpieces of all the arts, rose from all points of this universal garden, and beings which seemed more beautiful and more pure than the human race, all busy and all joyous, animated it with their labours and their concerts. Pierre traversed all this unknown world with the rapidity of a bird; and wherever his spirit passed, he saw fecundity, happiness, and peace flourish in [illegible] new forms. Then a being, which flew by him [illegible] for a long while without his recognizing it, said to him: 'You are at last in the heaven you have so much desired to possess, and you are among angels, for the times are accomplished! An eternity succeeds an eternity; and when you return at the end of this one, you will see still other wonders, another heaven and other angels.' Then Pierre, opening his eyes, recognized the place where he was and the being who spoke to him. It was the park of Villepreux, and it was Yseult; but that park touched the confines of heaven and of earth, and Yseult was an angel radiant with wisdom and beauty. And on looking attentively at the angels who passed, he recognized his father and the father of Yseult, walking arm in arm; he recognized Amaury and Romanet, who were conversing amicably; he recognized the Savinienne and the marchioness, who were gathering flowers in the same basket; he recognized, in fine, all those whom he loved and all those whom he knew, but transformed and idealized. And he asked himself what miracle had been wrought in them, that they should be so clothed with beauty, with strength, and with love. Then Yseult said to him: 'Do you not see that we are all brothers, all rich and all equal? The earth has again become heaven, because we have destroyed all the thorns of the ditches, and all the fences of the enclosures; we have again become angels, because we have effaced all distinctions and abjured all resentments. Love,

believe, work, and you will be an angel in this world of angels.'

'What is the matter with him that he sleeps thus with his eyes open? He seems as if he were dreaming in a fever. Wake up entirely, Pierre, that will be better for you than to tremble and sigh as you do.'

Thus spoke father Huguenin, and he shook his son to wake him. Pierre obeyed mechanically, and rose; but the heavens were not yet closed for him. He no longer slept; but he still saw ideal forms pass around him, and the harmony of the sacred lyres resounded in his ears. He was standing, and his vision was hardly dissipated. He was especially struck by the perfume of flowers which followed him even into reality.

'Do you not perceive the odour of roses and lilies!' said he to his father, who looked at him with an uneasy air.

'I think so, indeed,' said father Huguenin; 'your shirt is full of flowers; one would say that you wished to make your chest an altar for the Fete-Dieu.'

Pierre, in fact, saw Yseult's flowers escape from his bosom and fall at his feet.

'Ah!' said he, gathering them up, 'this is what procured for me that beautiful dream!' And without complaining that he had been interrupted, he resumed his work full of strength and ardour.

But he was soon called to go to the count de Villepreux upon some pretext relative to his work, and he went without suspecting the earnest desire experienced by the old patrician to converse at his ease, and without compromising himself, with the man of the people. To explain this fancy of the count's, it is good to let the reader know something of the previous life of this strange old man.

Son of one of the nobles attached to the fortunes and the conspiracy of Phillipe-Egalité, he had indirectly followed all the phases of that conspiracy during the revolution. He concealed himself in order not to share the fate of his father, when the latter expiated on the scaffold his connection with the prince. He afterwards extricated himself by degrees from that party with rare good luck, and insensibly recovered his standing with the 9th Thermidor. Under the empire he was a prefect, but not of the best; that is to say, that without making objections to the violent decrees of the government, he had been led, by his easy, and good-natured character, to display more gentleness and humanity than was consistent with his office. Dismissed at the south, he had owed to the protection of M. de Talleyrand, who liked his wit, and who laid great stress upon the deathof Eugene Villepreux (the son of our old count, and Yseult's father, killed in service during the war

with Spain), the compensation of a more important prefecture. His fortune had increased in these employments, and in lucky speculations, for which he had both the taste and the intelligence. Dismissed at the return of the Bourbons —in bad odour with a party which reproached him for his conduct during the revolution and his position under the empire,—he assumed an attitude of liberal opposition. He had missed the peerage, he despised or affected to despise it, and procured himself to be chosen deputy.

The nobles of his family and his neighbourhood accused him of littleness of mind, of perfidy and ambition, while the liberals attributed to him great strength of mind, an entirely republican energy, and profound views in politics. We must say very quickly that the good old lord, a man of wit, and a charming parlour orator, deserved

"Neither this excess of honour, nor this indignity."

He made an opposition of good taste, and without brilliancy. He had so much wit and good humour, that it was a pleasure to hear him mock at power, at the royal family, at the favourites, or the prelates in favour. When he thus gave loose to his satire, all Voltaire was resuscitated in his features and his person, and there was no liberal elector who could have refused his vote to a candidate that had made him dine so well, and laugh so heartily. The act which threw the best light upon his political character was that which had brought him to his manor of Villepreux at the period when we find him occupied with literature and joiner's work. He was the sixty-third deputy who, on the fourth of March of that same year, had risen from his seat, in full costume, to leave the chamber at the moment when Manuel was *clutched*, according to the expression, and by the order of M. the Viscount de Foucault. He had signed the protest desposited upon the bureau of the chamber on the fifth of March. This is sufficient to say what was the political course he ostensibly followed; but it is not saying what where his doctrines in reality, nor even what was the secret party whose cause he pleaded under the vague and very elastic form of constitutionalism. Among the parliamentary men who took part in the honourable act we have just mentioned, are to be found names the most eminent and the most praised in France, in the time of the Bourbons. Why can we not praise them equally at the time in which we now are! But there was, in the spontaneous impulse which made them protest against the illegal and violent proceedings of the government of that period, that diversity of cause which every political opposition assembles under its banner. The left side of the chamber had its acknowledged and official

language; but, at the bottom, that language really concealed some mysteries, and the extreme left had, it is said, certain connections with the society of cabonarism, of which the attorney-general, Bellart, said: 'Agreeing upon this point, *to destroy that which is*, the enemies of the throne are divided among themselves upon all other points, and upon *that which shall be*. Napoleon II., a foreign prince, the republic and *a thousand other ideas* quite as absurd and contradictory, while they divide our regulators upon the destiny which they have in reserve for us, are sufficient to inform, not only those who are faithful, but all men of good sense, of the rare happiness which would be derived to France from this first destruction, the prelude to many other destructions.'* The reader will perhaps discover hereafter, if it was to Napoleon II., to the foreign prince, of whom M. Bellart speaks, to the republic, or to *a certain personage* so singularly concealed by M. Bellart, under the periphrase of *a thousand other absurd ideas*, that the count de Villepreux looked, in the mystery of his thoughts and in the secret of his actions; we have here to do only with his character and his ideas.

A man of wit above all, rather acute and perspicacious in the matter of political facts than profound in views of social theory, piquing himself, nevertheless, on knowing everything, and understanding everything, the count de Villepreux was, perhaps, the most *advanced* expression of the nobility of his time. He loved La fayette; he esteemed d'Argenson; he had secretly rendered services to more than one noble outlaw; he was even enthusiastic for the system of Babœuf, without granting it either faith or confidence. He was at the same time a great admirer of M. de Chateaubriand and of Beranger. His understanding seized with ardour all that was beautiful and great, while his soul, frivolous as that of a prince, could not fix itself seriously upon any conclusion. He believed in all systems, assimilating them to himself with a marvellous facility, for a quarter of an hour, and passing from one to the other without hypocricy and without inconsistency; for this amateur's nature was his real, his dominant nature. He had all the qualities and all the defects of an artist and a great lord: avaricious and prodigal, according to the fancy of the moment, absolute and gracious, enthusiastic and sceptical, according to circumstances, he was often angry, and never kept a grudge. No one understood life better as regards comfort, independence, and that practical good sense which protects the individual without wounding society too much. At the bottom of all this there was a real goodness, a gracious obligingness, a well-understood generosity; but there

* Requisition in the case of La Rochelle.

was also, through all these domestic virtues, an unequalled frivolity, a laughing selfishness, and a profound indifference resulting from that same easy fondness for all general principles and for all social ideas without application and without consequences.

He had gone through the world of events, with his arms folded, an epigram in his mouth, and sometimes tears in his eyes. Every great action had his sympathy, but no doctrine captivated him beyond the time that was necessary for him to hear and to know it. He read in the men and events of his time as in books of relaxation; and when his curiosity was satisfied, he smilingly went to sleep on the last page, consenting that every one should have his fashion of thinking, provided the social order was not too much shaken, and the theories had no pretension of passing into practice.

With these habits and dispositions, though he had much tenderness of heart, and great family virtue in a certain sense, he had allowed his children to grow up rather at a venture, and his grandchildren entirely by chance. Thinking about them a great deal, and bestowing upon them all the means of instruction, there was neither consecutiveness, nor wholeness, nor discernment in the contradictory notions with which he had encumbered their young minds; and as his friends had sometimes remonstrated with him on the dangers of such an education, he had persuaded himself that he acted thus in consequence of a system. This system, somewhat renewed from the *Emile*, consisted in having none; it was the excuse he presented to himself to conceal his incapacity to do better. In fact, it would have been difficult for him to introduce into the minds of his pupils the unity and certainty which were wanting in his own. If he sometimes felt this, he consoled himself for it with the idea that at least he opposed no obstacles to the teachings of the future.

This method had produced contrary effects in two natures so opposed as those of Yseult and her brother Raoul. The first reflecting, sensible, firm, profoundly just and delicate, eager for solid instruction ond poetical culture, had acquired a great deal, and did, in fact, await her conclusions from time and circumstances. She had contracted but few prejudices in her acquaintance with the world, and the least breath of truth could free her from them. With her, the education à la Jean Jacques had done wonders; and perhaps no education, even had it been a bad one, could have corrupted that nature so upright and so grandly wise.

The other having shown a disposition very averse to study, they had been satisfied with giving him masters, in order to conform to custom; but matters had never been pushed so far as to make him shed tears. The grandfather had that

selfish tenderness of soul which cannot strive against the rebellions and tears of childhood. Young Raoul had therefore learned only the art of amusing himself. He knew how to ride; he excelled in shooting, swimming, waltzing, and playing billiards. Although he was in appearance of a very delicate complexion, he was indefatigable in all bodily exercises; and he derived from this the greatest vanity he had, after that of his name, which he had acquired in his acquaintance with the young dandies of the great world. Upon this point the old count was indeed a little frightened at the results of his plan of a free education. The young man showed no taste for liberal ideas. On the contrary, he had embraced the *ultra* side, which he saw was affected among his pleasure companions. He was well received in the fashionable world, and was there congratulated on *thinking well*. He was mortally ennuied in the society of his grandfather, whom he secretly accused of seeing low company. His whole ambition was to enter the royal guard as an officer. But there he had met with opposition on the part of the grandfather, and their explanations had been quite sharp. When his personal interest was openly compromised, the count was not wanting in choleric will. He feared lest his popularity should desert him if he devoted his son to the service of the reigning princes. On his side the young man thought it very wrong that, to please the rabble, his grandfather should allow himself to manifest an opinion which might close against him all access to court favour. He therefore impatiently awaited his majority, which would permit him to mark out for himself an entirely opposite career; and the count puzzled his brains to retain him, without very well seeing how it would be possible. At the bottom, they loved each other, for the old man had a tender and compassionate heart, and Raoul was not without his good qualities. He was a victim of that absence of doctrine which broke all moral and political bonds in his family; but he would have been susceptible of receiving a better direction, and he had in him a certain secret delicacy of conscience which still restrained him.

Yseult had a deeper and better felt tenderness for the count. Her soul could admit only great affections; and, as she had not experience enough to appreciate her grandfather's frivolity, she believed in him blindly. She took all his words, all his opinions, as serious, and held herself, in order to direct her course among the contradictions which she did not well understand, between an ardent liberalism and an instinctive respect for the laws of the world. Sometimes, however, she presented, on this latter point, objections to which the count listened with complaisance, and which he was far from being able to repel. Then he escaped from the difficulty by saying

that Yseult had all the severity of logic which is conformable to a fresh mind, and that he did not wish to stifle those generous faculties before their time. It was necessary to be satisfied with this reply; and the good Yseult, abandoned to herself, gave herself up to many dreams, without knowing if she should ever be permitted to realize them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN Pierre Huguenin drew near to his two noble hosts, the count was seated in a rustic arm-chair under the shadow of his favourite linden. He read his newspapers while making a Pythagorean breakfast, and his grand-daughter, with a golden paper-knife, cut the leaves of a political pamphlet he had just received; a favourite dog was sleeping at their feet. An old valet-de-chambre went and came about them, watching that they should not have time to express a desire. Yseult had her eyes constantly fixed upon the alley by which Pierre arrived. He found her timid, almost trembling. He, exalted and animated by I know not what secret strength, felt himself full of courage and serenity.

'Approach, approach, my dear master Pierre,' cried the count laying his newspaper on the table, and taking off his spectacles 'I have great pleasure in seeing you, and thank you for having come at my invitation. Please to take a seat here.' And he pointed to a chair on his left, Yseult being on his right.

'I came to receive your orders,' replied Pierre, hesitating about taking a seat.

'We have nothing to do with orders here,' returned the count; 'no one gives orders to a man like you. Thank God we have abjured that old style of speaking between master and journeyman. Besides, are you not yourself a master in your art?'

'My art is but an obscure trade,' replied Pierre, who felt but little disposed to expansion.

'You are capable of everything,' returned the count, 'and if you feel any other ambition—'

'Not any, M. the count,' interrupted Pierre with a firm tranquillity.

'Still you must yield, my good young man, and take a seat by my side, in order to converse without mistrust and without hauteur with an old man who requests you in a friendly manner.'

Pierre, overcome by these affectionate words, and perhaps also by the sad and uneasy attitude of Mademoiselle de Villepreux, took a seat in the chair opposite to her. He thought that she would rise and go away, as she usually did when he conferred with her grandfather; but this time she remained and did not even move her chair back from the narrow table, which left only a short distance between her face and that of the journeyman joiner, and perhaps a shorter interval still between their feet. Pierre was very careful not to draw his chair entirely up to the table. He felt calm and master of himself; but it seemed to him that, if he only grazed Yseult's dress, the earth would have fled from under him, and he would again have fallen into the empire of dreams.

'Pierre,' resumed the count, in a tone of paternal authority, 'you must open your heart to me. My daughter met you this morning in the park, overwhelmed, despairing, out of your senses. She accosted you, she questioned you; she did well. She made to you, in my name, offers of services, promises of friendship; she spoke to you after my own heart. You rejected those offers with a pride which renders you still more estimable in my eyes, and which makes it my duty to serve you in spite of yourself. Be careful, then, not to be unjust, Pierre! I know beforehand what the old republican your father may have said to put you on your guard against me. I have an infinite esteem for your father, and do not wish to wound his prejudices; but there is this difference between him and me, that he is the man of the past; and that I, his elder, am still the man of the present. I flatter myself that I understand equality better than he; and if you refuse to confide to me the secret of your trouble, I shall think I understand human brotherhood better than you also.'

It was very difficult for the young workman to refuse his confidence and his admiration to such language. He felt himself entirely penetrated with gratitude and sympathy. While the count was speaking to him, Yseult had placed a cup of old Sèvres under the mechanic's hand; and the count had poured out some coffee for him with such natural good nature, that Pierre had understood that the best possible taste, under the circumstances, was to accept in the same manner as they offered, without hesitation and without words. But he was troubled when Yseult half rose to offer him the sugar. He had only strength to look at her, and the expression of affectionate sensibility which he found upon her face did him good mingled with a certain harm. He accepted and swallowed all that she offered, not daring to refuse anything, and fearing nothing so much as to exchange a word with her at that moment. Still, in proportion as he ate (and he had great need of it, for he was fasting), he felt his pre-

sence of mind return. The Mocha, which was very fine, and to which he was not accustomed, spontaneously communicated a sovereign warmth to his brain. He felt his tongue loose, his blood circulate freely, his ideas become clear, and the fear of ridicule yield to more serious considerations.

'You wish me to speak?' said he to the count, after having replied negatively to all the suppositions made by the latter respecting the cause of his suffering. 'Well! I will speak. It will doubtless be a very useless discourse, and I believe that this beautiful dog, whose plumpness and fine condition would make many men envious, would be the first to despise it if he could understand it.'

'But we are not dogs,' replied the old count, laughing: 'I hope that we shall understand, and we shall take good care not to despise, for fear of being despised in our turn. Come, proud youth, give utterance to your thought.'

Then Pierre began naively to relate all the ideas which had come to him in the park from dawn until sunrise. He did it without emphasis, but without embarrassment, and without false shame. He did not fear to tell the count all that he considered illegitimate in the fact of his riches; for, at the same time, he told all that he considered sacred in his right to happiness. He stated to him the whole social problem which was working in him with a clearness, and even with an eloquence which revealed to the count an extraordinary man, and compelled him to look at his daughter from time to time with an expression of astonishment and admiration, which she very visibly shared. I know not if Pierre perceived this latter fact: I think he did not wish to look at Yseult, in the fear that an air of doubt and of pity might deprive him of the strength to say all. I think also, that, if he had looked at her, and seen her smile with acquiescence, while her eyes were moist with sympathy, he would have lost his senses, or at least the thread of his discourse.

When he had told all the terror and all the sadness which his reflections had awakened in him, and the abyss of doubt and despair to which they had led him, he confessed that he had felt, in that moment of distress, a horror of life and a necessity of flying to a better world. He confessed that he had entertained thoughts of suicide, and that the feeling of filial duty alone had power to bind him to an existence which no longer appeared to him but as an overpowering trial in a place of torture and iniquity.

When he uttered these last words in an agitated voice, and with a pallid face, Yseult rose suddenly and made some turns in the alley, as if she were seeking for something. But when

she returned to her place, her features were changed and her eyes shining: perhaps she had wept.

Nothing could equal the surprise of the Count de Villepreux. He looked with piercing eyes at the inspired face of the young proletary, and asked himself where this man, accustomed to handle a plane, could have discovered and developed the germs of ideas so vast, of thoughts so elevated.

'Do you know, master Pierre,' said he to him, when he had listened to the end with the greatest attention, 'that you would make a great orator, and perhaps a great writer? You speak like an apostle, and you reason like a philosopher!'

Although this remark appeared to him frivolous in so serious a discussion, Pierre was flattered in spite of himself at being thus praised before Yseult.

'I neither know how to speak nor how to write,' replied he, blushing; 'and having only problems to state, I should be but a poor preacher, unless you would be willing, M. the count, to dictate to me my conclusions, and determine my articles of faith.'

'Palsembleu!' cried the count, striking on the table with his snuff box and looking at his daughter, 'how he talks of that! He moves heaven and earth from top to bottom; he searches more profoundly into the mysteries of life than all the sages of antiquity, and he wishes me to know the secrets of the Eternal Father! But do you take me, then, for the devil or the pope? And do you believe that it will not require the wisdom of two thousand years to come, added to all the wisdom of the past, to reply to your proposition? The greatest minds of the present age will have nothing more to reply to you than this: "Why the devil do you trouble yourself? Try to be rich, and to accustom yourself to see the poor around you." Or else: "My dear friend, you are crazy, you must be taken care of." Yes, upon my word, my poor master Pierre, of a hundred thousand systems, all more beautiful and more impossible each than the other, which may be presented to you, there is not a single one worth so much as that which I have adopted for my own special use.'

'And what is it then, sir?' returned Pierre with earnestness; 'for it is that I asked of you.'

'To admire what you say, and endure what is done here below."

'Is that all?' cried Pierre, rising with an excited air. 'Really, it was not worth the trouble of questioning me, if you had no better answer to give. Ah! I told you mademoiselle,' added he, looking at Yesult without any feeling of confusion, absorbed as he was in the highest thoughts; 'I told you truly that your father could do nothing for me!'

'Is not resignation the result of experience and the last term of wisdom?' replied Yseult, with an effort.

'Resignation for ourselves is a virtue which we must have, and which is not very difficult when we respect ourselves a little,' replied Pierre. 'As for myself, I declare that my poverty and my obscurity do not weigh upon me yet, and that I should be much more unhappy, much more troubled in my sentiment of justice if I were born rich like you mademoiselle. But to resign myself to the unhappiness of others, to bear the yoke which weighs down innocent heads, to look tranquilly upon the course of the world without endeavouring to discover another faith, another order, another code of morals! Oh! that is impossible—impossible! It is enough to make me never sleep, never amuse myself, never know a moment of happiness; it is enough to make me lose my courage, my reason, or my life!'

'Well, my father?' cried Yseult, raising towards the count her moistened eyes, ardent with hope and impatience.

She awaited in vain a reply that might sanction, by the maturity of judgment, the evangelical enthusiasm of the young workman. The count smiled, raised his eyes to heaven, and drew his daughter to his heart, while he extended his other hand to Pierre.

'Generous young souls,' said he to them, after a moment's silence, 'you will still have many dreams of this nature, before you recognize that there are immense paradoxes and sublime problems without possible solution in this lower world. I do not desire for you so soon the discouragement and the disgust which are the lot of wisdom in white hairs. Form wishes, form systems, as many as you will, and give up your belief in them as late as you can. Master Pierre,' continued he, rising and lifting his cap of black velvet before the stupified young man, 'my old head bows before you. I esteem you, admire and love you. Come often and talk with me. Your virtue will make me somewhat younger; and perhaps, after many reveries, the mountain which weighs down our ideal will be lightened by the weight of a whole grain of sand.'

Saying this he passed his arm under that of his daughter, and departed, carrying away his pamphlets, his spectacles, and his newspapers, with the tranquillity of a man accustomed to sport with the grandest ideas and the most sacred feelings.

Pierre remained overwhelmed at first; then an irony, mingled with indignation and pity, took possession of him. He considered himself very ridiculous for having allowed the secret of his highest thoughts to be profaned by the frozen breath of this old man, grown grey in defections. It was

difficult for him not to overwhelm him inwardly with the deepest contempt.

'What!' said he to himself, 'to know these things, to have neither the means nor the desire to repel their truth, and to keep them in one's self as a useless treasure of which one understands neither the value nor the use! To be a great lord, rich and powerful, to have grown old in the midst of social struggles, to have passed through the republic and the courts, and yet not to have a decided belief, not a victorious feeling, not an efficacious will, not even a generous hope! And to be near the end of life without knowing how to express anything more than a barren regret, a derisive sympathy, a hypocritical discouragement!—If that be one of the most sensible and the best informed of his caste, what then are the others, and what can we hope from dead bodies arrayed in the most beautiful insignia of life: power and renown?'

In this holy anger, Pierre was excited even to injustice. He could not make allowance for the effect of early education, and for prejudices drawn in with a mother's milk. Nothing is more difficult than to place ourselves at a point of view entirely different to that from which we look. If Pierre had known society, not such as it should be, but such as it is, he would, in spite of the impetuosity of his virtuous indignation, have retained some respect and much affection for this old man, superior to the larger part of his class, and remarkable among all men from the goodness of his instincts and the simplicity of his first impressions. But he had been drawn to him by Yseult's promises, and for an instant, on seeing himself listened to with so much interest, he had expected a solution in conformity with his wishes. His sorrow was great at seeing himself praised and pitied at the same time, as an apostle and a fool.

One single thing gave him strength to return to his work, that is, to resume patiently the yoke of life: this was the remembrance of the expression which Yseult had on leaving him. It seemed to him that the surprise, the disappointment, the consternation, which he had experienced at that moment, filled the soul of that noble girl as they did his own. He had felt, on meeting her last look, something solemn like an eternal engagement, or an eternal farewell. His soul, recurring to that mysterious commotion, felt itself filled with joy and pain at the same time. He recognized, at this hour, that he loved passionately, and he did not know if the thrilling of his heart proceeded from despair or from happiness.

CHAPTER XXV.

At the moment when Pierre resumed the road to his workshop, the count's old valet-de-chambre recalled him, to request that he would repair the table on which his master had just breakfasted. It was a pretty little inlaid piece of furniture, with a small table to eat upon, a leaf for writing, and a drawer beneath. Pierre philosophically returned to go to work, and, the valet-de-chambre assisting him, they turned down the table in order to examine the broken part. They emptied the drawer; the valet collected in a basket a quantity of journals and old papers, and Pierre took the table on his shoulder to carry it to the workshop.

When he had finished mending it, he shook the drawer to clean it before restoring it to its place; and then he saw a card half-sticking out of a crack. He drew it entirely out, and when he was about to throw it away as a useless thing, he was struck by its strange form. It was only the half of a card, but it was cut slantingly several times, in a manner which appeared systematical. Pierre, who knew that the count was well informed in geometry, sought to find if there was not therein some problem of that science; but he could find nothing like it, and put the card in his pocket, thinking that perhaps Yseult, in a moment of reverie, had cut it thus by chance. 'Who can know,' asked he of himself, 'what thoughts secretly agitated her when she gave herself up to this pre-occupation? and as, after all, nothing is done by chance, the form of this cutting perhaps contains in a symbolical manner all the secrets of her soul.'

Achille Lefort had informed him the night before that he should pass some days at Villepreux, having some old accounts to settle with the steward relative to the wine-cellar of the chateau. Pierre and he had agreed to meet that evening in the park. It was still daylight when Pierre went to the rendezvous, and while waiting for him, began to consider his card attentively. It was then that some confused ideas recurred to his memory. He had followed with interest, in the journals of the preceding year, the trial of the sergeants of la Rochelle. He had read the fanatical or enthusiastically eloquent speeches of the attorney-general Bellart, and of the advocate-general Marchangy. The revolution of numerous details relative to the secrets of carbonarism had struck him.

Seeing Achille Lefort approach, he had the sudden inspiration to present the card, saying to him: 'Do you know that?'

'How! what do I see?' cried the travelling clerk; 'we were *cousins*, and you concealed it from me? Well, you mystified me admirably! But who could have guessed that? You were trying me then? You were charged to watch me, to sound me? Was there any doubt respecting me? Really, I think I am dreaming! Speak, answer me?'

'If we are not cousins, we are in the way to become so,' replied Pierre, who, on seeing Achille's naive stupefaction, had great difficulty to keep from laughing. 'It was the count de Villepreux who intrusted this sign to me, in order that I might sooner come to an understanding with you.'

'But if you are not initiated,' returned Achille more and more astonished, 'this is contrary to all rules.'

'Apparently,' pursued Pierre, 'he has the right to act thus.'

'But not at all!' cried the other. 'Though he is affiliated to the supreme *vente*, he is not permitted to disclose our signs and our secrets. I see well that the old coward throws the saddle after the horse, or that fear confuses his brain so much that he does not know what he is about. I ought to have expected something like this, after all he told me yesterday. The news from Tracodero has unhorsed him completely; he thinks that all is lost. He was anxious enough at the beginning of the war. He has come to take refuge in his old keep only to hold himself aloof from events, and now he would like to hide himself with his owls in the cracks of his emblazoned walls! Such are men! when they have a moment of courage, they have an increase of cowardice immediately afterwards. Faith, I can't understand the madness of a directing committee that hopes to get any good out of these old nobles; as if they could forget the reign of terror, and as if they could do anything else but spoil our plans and embarrass our manœuvres: excuse me, master Pierre, I don't say this from distrust of you,—I know that you are as loyal, as discreet, as the best among us. But, in fine, no one of us is allowed to jest with his promises and our secrets.'

'Be re-assured and appeased, M. Lefort,' replied Pierre, 'No one gave me this card. I found it at the bottom of a drawer; and if any one has revealed to me the secrets of the association, it is you, who have just told me much more than I asked.'

'Ah! then you are laughing at me!' said Achille, his eyes glittering with vexation and in a tone which seemed to wish to assume rather more than usual.

'Gently, my master,' replied Pierre, 'take this card, it can do me no good, and your secrets do not appear to be much compromised by the discovery of this plaything. Amuse yourself with these things; I have no right to laugh at them

—I who am bound by puerilities of the same nature to a society more secret, more vast, more solid, and more believing than your own.'

'You seem to be giving me a lesson, master Pierre,' returned Achille, completely vexed. 'Whatever esteem I may have for you, I do not acknowledge such a right. If you were ignorant and rude like the greater part of your fellows, I might place myself, by the silence of pity, above the reach of your poor jests. But from the moment that I look upon you as my equal in education and reasoning powers, I declare to you that I will not be any more patient with you than I would be with one of my comrades.'

'M. Lefort,' replied Pierre with the greatest calmness, 'I thank you for the flattering expressions with which you accompany your threats; but I see peep out the pride of a man who puts on his glove before giving a blow. Come, I will be more proud than you,—I will extend my hand to you, declaring that I regret having wounded you.'

'Pierre,' said Achille, affectionately clasping the mechanic's hand, 'I feel that I love you; but, I beg of you, let not this friendship be broken by the pride of either of us.'

'I make the same request of you,' said Pierre smiling.

'My part is more difficult than yours,' returned Achille, 'you are the people, that is, the aristocrat, the sovereign, whom we conspirators of the third estate come to implore for the cause of justice and truth. You treat us as subalterns; you question us with hauteur, with distrust; you ask us if we are fools or intriguers; you subject us to a thousand insults, that you must allow. And when we do not carry the spirit of propagandism even to Christian humility, when our blood boils in our veins, and when we claim to be treated by you as your equals, you tell us that we were not sincere, that we bear within us hatred and pride,—in a word, that we are impostors and cowards who lower ourselves to you in order to exploit you. The government has adopted this system of calumnies in order to diminish our influence with you, to detach the people from its only, its true friends; and you thus throw yourselves into the trap of absolutism. This is neither generous nor wise.'

'What you say contains excellent truths from the point of view in which you are,' returned Pierre. 'But there is much in reply to justify us. Even in what concerns you, you who call yourselves sincere men, I might object to you that you have received from heaven no mission to excite and agitate us, you who have never reflected seriously upon our condition, and who, even while lamenting it, know absolutely no method of changing it. I might also tell you that you contract, in the trade you follow (for it is a trade, allow me the expres-

sion), habits quite as jesuitical in their nature, as those which you attribute to a corrupting government. You lightly make to us promises which you know you cannot keep; then you observe us, you penetrate us, you learn our weaknesses, our errors, our vices; and when you have endured for some time this rough contact with the people, as the spirit of charity and of teaching is not really in you, as you are tormented by ideas purely political and by no means moral, you become disgusted and you withdraw from us saying; "I have seen the people, they are ferocious, they are brutified; it will be centuries before they are fit to govern themselves. Beware of the people, my friends, let us not go to fast. The people is behind us, ready to overwhelm us. Woe to us if we let loose the enraged beast—"'

'We do not say that!' cried Achille.

'You do say it; you cannot help writing and publishing it; your journals are full of the protests of your lawyers and your orators who deny and despise us. Think you that we do not read your journals? "The people," you say, "are not that vile population which howls in the mobs, which demands blood and pillage, which begs, club in hand, ready to take the life of any one who does not give up his purse. The people are the healthy part of the population, which earns its bread honestly, which respects acquired rights, seeking to deserve the same rights, not by violence and anarchy, but by perseverence in labour, by aptitude for instruction, and respect for the laws of our country?" This is how you define the people, this is how you put on their Sunday clothes to present yourselves before the tribunals, before the chambers, and before all those who have the means to subscribe to your publications. But the coarse dress which the workman wears during the week, his horrible wounds, his disgusting maladies, and his vermin—but his deep indignation when misery reduces him to extremity, his too just threats when he sees himself forgotten and trodden under foot—but his shocking delirium when the regret of yesterday and the fear of to-morrow compel him to *drink*, as one of your poets has said, *the forgetfulness of sorrow*—but all that there is in him of rage, of disorder, and abandonment of self in the fact of his misery, you wash your hands of this; you know nothing of it: you would blush to justify it; you say: "those are our enemies also; they are the horror and disgrace of society!" And yet, those also are the people! Cleanse their stains, remedy their evils, and you will see clearly that this vile herd came from the bosom of God as well as yourselves. In vain do you wish to make distinctions and categories; there are not two peoples, there is but one. That one which works in your houses, smiling, quiet and well-dressed, is the same that

howls at your gates, irritated, gloomy, and covered with rags. The only difference is that you have given work and bread to the first, and that you have found nothing for the other to do. Why, for example, do you, M. Lefort, place me, incessantly, in your praises, apart from my family. Do you think to do me honour? by no means, I wish nothing of the kind, not I. The lowest of beggars is my equal, mine. I do not blush to recognize him, as do many among us, into whom you have breathed your ingratitude and your vanity, at the same time with your habits of comfort. No, no! that wretched being is not of a cast inferior to mine, he is my brother, and his abject situation makes me blush for the comfort in which I live. Understand this well, M. Lefort: so long as there are human beings covered with the leprosy of poverty, so long I shall say that you have done no good with your conspiracies, your citizen charters, and your changes of cockade.'

'My dear Huguenin,' said Achille, with emotion, 'your sentiments are grand; but you are in too much haste to accuse us. Do you think it so easy a matter to be the physician of moral humanity, and to find without hesitation and without failure the remedy for so many evils?'

'Is it seeking a remedy, then, to turn away your eyes with horror and to stop your nostrils, saying that there is nothing but corruption and infection in the hospital? What should you think of a surgeon who could not see an ulcerated limb without fainting? would that be devotedness? would it even be a love of science? would it be an indication of a real vocation. Well! have courage then to descend into the lazar-houses of moral humanity, as you say; have courage then to sound with your hands the abyss of our evils, and do not lose time in saying that it is a horrible sight; think of the remedy: for I have never seen a physician, however slothful, however ignorant he might be otherwise, abandon a patient under the pretext that he was too disgusting to be cured. Now, if I pass from the sincere but shallow republican, to those who are neither the one nor the other, where shall I find words to express my opinion of them! I have known some, you see, though I have been accustomed only to the society of the workshop. That physician with whom you caused me to sup at the Vaudois', is he not a man who, in the event of a revolution, has a powerful personage, a prince of the blood-royal, all ready in his pocket, at once to take the place of him who will be overturned. And without going very far, your conspirator deputy, your member of the supreme vente your old count de Villepreux, with whom, I am sure, you have more political than business transactions, have you not just given me a faithful portrait of him?'

'Perhaps I went too far; I accused him, in my excitement of a fault which he did not commit.'

'Do not try to reinstate him in my good opinion. I have talked with him for an hour to-day. I have seen the bottom of his conscience. There is foothold everywhere, I assure you, for whomsoever likes to follow, without fatigue and without danger, the current of fortune.'

Here Pierre related his interview with the count, without mentioning, however, the circumstance which had led to it. His recital made Achille reflect a great deal. He asked himself what he could have replied to the question which the mechanic had addressed to the old rich man, and yet he could find no objection against the right of the mechanic thus to state the problem of property.

'It is certain,' said he, 'that this is a grave question, and one which must be considered by men of the age and of genius.'

'And of heart,' returned Pierre: 'for with intelligence alone, you will never find the answer.'

'And without it, nevertheless, what good does devotedness do? Is it not necessary that men superior to the mass by science and meditation should come to the assistance of the people, and enlighten them respecting their real interest?'

'Don't use that word, M. Achille. Our real interests! great God! we know very well what that means in the ideas of your future legislators!'

"But, in fine, Pierre, you do not distrust me?'

'No, certainly; but I do not believe in you, for you know no more than I, who know nothing.'

'Then have recourse to and confidence in superior men.'

'Where are they? What have they done? What have they taught? What! you have heard them, you act under their orders, you work for their profit, and you know nothing, you have nothing to say to me from them? They have a secret, and they do not intrust it to their adepts? And they do not let the people see even a glimpse of it? Are they then the brahmins of India?'

'You have a cruel and discouraging logic, master Pierre. What must be done, then, if no one knows what he does or what he says? Must we fold our arms, and wait for the people to deliver themselves? Do you believe they will succeed without counsels, without guides, without a rule?'

'They will succeed, however, and they will have all these. Their rule, they will themselves make; their guides, they will draw from their own bosom; their counsels, they will receive from the Spirit of God, which will descend upon them. We must, indeed, count a little upon Providence.'

'So you reject every kind of light coming from the chief

of liberalism? Because a man has celebrity, talents, and influence on the middling classes, the people will distrust him?'

'The day on which a man shall come to us and say: "Men praise my merit, admire my knowledge, bend under my power: but listen, my children; my science, my strength, my genius, give me no right that can be hurtful to you. I acknowledge, therefore, that the most simple among you has a right, quite as much as I and mine, to comfort, to liberty, to education; that the weakest among you has a right to repress my strength if I abuse it, and the most obscure to reject my opinion, if it be immoral; in fine, that I must give proof of virtue and of charity in order to be, in my own eyes as in yours, a great savant, a great sovereign, or a great poet." Oh! let those who are called *great men* come and say this to us! we will cast ourselves upon their bosom, as upon the bosom of God; for God does not create by knowledge and by power alone—he creates by love also. But so long as, despising the grossness of our understanding, they fold us like beasts in an enclosure where there is not even grass to crop, which will not hold us all without our crushing and smothering each other, and from which, nevertheless, we cannot get out, because they have everywhere placed soldiers to guard from our hands the beautiful fruits of the earth, we will say to them: "Be silent, and let us get out as we can. Your advice is treachery, and your triumphs are insults. Do not walk upon our chains with a proud air; do not march through our disheartened ranks with the words of false pity in your mouths. We do not wish to do anything for you, not even to bow to you; for you, who bow to us very low when you are afraid or have need of us, you know very well that you have not the least desire to resign into our hands your treasures, your power, and your glory." This is what we shall say to your men of intellect.'

'But all that you put in the mouth of the man who asks from the people his strength and his celebrity, I feel in my heart. If I have such sentiments, I, an obscure servant of the cause, why will you not allow that nobler intellects may have them in the highest degree?'

'Because, until the present time, this has not shown itself to be the case; because I have read all I could read, and have not even had a glimpse of what I sought; because I have found all the solutions given by your past and present great minds to be proud, cruel, and anti-human.'

'It is also because you are too much in the ideal; you ask more of men than they can accomplish. You would wish for chiefs and councillors who would unite in themselves the boldness of Napoleon and the humility of Jesus Christ. This is exacting too much of human nature in one day; and be-

sides, if such a man should come, he would not be understood. You reason, you individually—the people do not reason.'

'The people reason better than you think; and the proof is, that you cannot succeed in agitating them. They feel their hour is not yet come. They prefer rather to endure their evils some days longer, than to raise their bruised side in order to bruise the other side by changing their position. They wait for the vault over them to be raised, so that they may stand erect. And do you know of what that vault is made? Of the citizens first, and of the nobles on top. Citizens! shake off your nobles, if they are too heavy for you: that is your business. We will help you, if it be proved to us some day that it will relieve ourselves. But if you are as heavy as they, look on for yourselves! we will shake you off in our turn.

'But what will you do until then?

'What you advise us. We will work with all our strength not to die of hunger, and we still find means to help each other. We will preserve our companionship among workmen, in spite of its abuses and its excesses, because its principle is more beautiful than that of your carbonarism. It tends to re-establish equality among ourselves, while yours tends to maintain inequality upon the earth.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

On the next day the marchioness did not dine at the chateau. She had gone to pay a visit to one of her relatives established in a small city in the neighbourhood. She departed in the morning in a light open calash drawn by one horse and accompanied by a single domestic who drove. She had taken, intentionally, or rather by the advice of Yseult, the most modest equipage of the chateau, in order not to wound the self-love of her relative, who was not rich. This precaution had not prevented all the small people of the city from posting themselves at their doors and windows to see her pass, saying to each other with bitterness: 'Look at that marchioness with *her* coach and *her* coachmen! Nevertheless she is old Clicot the dyer's daughter.'

Josephine was kept from dinner by her cousin, and could not resume the road to Villepreux before the close of day. She remarked with a certain anxiety, as she entered the carriage, that Wolf, the coachman, had a loud voice and a red face. This anxiety increased when she saw him rapidly

descend the badly paved street of the city, grazing the corner stones with that audacity and that good luck which often accompany drunken people. The fact is that Wolf had *met some friends:* an expression consecrated among drunkards to explain and justify their frequent mishaps. Those honest persons have so many friends that they keep no account of them, and you can go nowhere with them that they do not meet some.

After two hundred paces, Wolf, and consequently the calash and the marchioness, had, by a miracle. already escaped so many disasters, that it was to be feared Providence would soon be wearied. In vain Josephine commanded and conjured him to go more gently; he paid no attention to her, and seemed to give wings to the quiet horse he drove. Fortunately perhaps, heaven inspired him with the idea of renewing the snapper to his whip, and of stopping, for that purpose, before the door of a small house situated at the extremity of the suburb, decorated with this inscription: *Father Labrique, horse-shoer, lets lodgings for man and beast, sells bran, straw, oats, &c.*

The evening still grew darker, and Josephine's fear went on increasing. As soon as she saw the Automedon down from his seat, busy talking with the people of the house, who brought him at the same time a snapper for his whip and a small glass of brandy, she resolved to leave the carriage and return to the city, in order to ask her cousin for a man to drive her, or hospitality until the next day. There was no hope that Wolf, who, of course, pretended to be absolutely fasting, would consent to listen to her complaints. She therefore called for some one to open the carriage door. 'Sir,' cried she at a venture to a man whom she saw stopping in the middle of the road, 'have the goodness to help me from the carriage.' Before she had finished her sentence, the door was opened, and a respectful and assiduous cavalier offered her his hand. It was the Corinthian.

'You here!' cried the marchioness with more joy than prudence.

'I was waiting for you to pass,' replied Amaury, lowering his voice.

The marchioness, confused, stopped, one foot out of the carriage, one hand in that of Amaury.

'I do not understand what you mean to say,' returned she, in a trembling voice, 'How and why did you wait for me?'

'I came here in the day to make some purchases relating to my business. I dined in this cabaret at the same time with M. Wolf, your coachman. I saw him drink so much that I became anxious as to the manner in which he would drive your carriage, and I waited here to see if he went

straight, and if there was no danger of your being overturned.'

'He is in a state of intolerable drunkenness,' replied the marchioness; 'and if you would have the goodness to accompany me back to the city—'

'And why not to the chateau?' returned the Corinthian. "I have never driven a calash; but I know how to drive a covered cart on occasion, and it does not seem to me that there is much difference.'

'You would have no repugnance to mounting the box?'

'I should have a great deal under other circumstances,' replied the Corinthian, smiling; 'but I feel none at this moment.'

Josephine understood, and felt herself divided, between terror of what was passing within her, and the irresistible desire to accept Amaury's offer; and it was not fear alone that impelled her to it.

'But how shall we manage,' said she. 'It is not possible for more than one to sit upon the box, and Wolf would never consent to climb up behind the carriage. He is full of self-love, and does not believe himself drunk the least in the world; he will make an uproar. That man frightens me terribly. I should rather return on foot to the chateau than allow myself to be driven by him.'

'I would rather drag the carriage myself than let you walk five long leagues,' replied the Corinthian.

'Well! we will leave him here,' said Josephine, whose cheeks were burning. 'Let us go!'

'Let us go!' said the Corinthian. 'There he is entering the carabet: we shall be far away before he thinks of coming out.'

He precipitately closed the door, leaped upon the box, seized the whip and reins, and departed like a flash, without giving the marchioness time for reflection.

Where had he found so much boldness? Eh! What do I know? Reader, it is easier for you to understand than for me to explain. There are natures which are timid like Pierre Huguenin's, reserved like Yseult's. There are also natures which are spontaneous like the marchioness's, impetuous like the Corinthian's. Then there is youth, beauty which seeks and attracts beauty, love which levels ranks and laughs at custom; there is also opportunity which emboldens, and night which protects.

The Corinthian descended the hill with more temerity than Wolf would have done—and yet Josephine felt no fear; and yet that poor Wolf was not the most intoxicated of the three.

When they were at the bottom of the hill, it was necessary to ascend, and there it was impossible for the horse to keep up

his trot. Besides, were they not far enough a-head to let the poor beast breathe? But the marchioness was not yet easy. That drunken man might run after the carriage, reclaim his whip and his box, of which he was as jealous as a king could be of his throne and his sceptre; in fine, dispute their possession, by force, with the usurper. The marchioness shuddered at the idea of such a scene; and, in her anxiety, it was quite natural that she should move about in the carriage, that she should change her place, that she should even take the front seat in order to see if no one was running towards them from behind. It was also natural that the Corinthian should [illegible] from time to time, and rest his elbow upon the [illegible] of the [illegible] seat of the calash, in order to reassure the marchioness [illegible] and reply to her frequent questions. [illegible] unexpected meeting, this sudden determination, [illegible] were quite strange enough for them to express their astonishment and exchange some exclamations.

[illegible] who had [illegible] been able to free herself from [illegible] which [illegible] called impropriety in the great [illegible] herself [illegible] utterance to a reflection which, [illegible] to the conversation.

'[illegible] said she, what will they say of me [illegible] will tell all the cabaret, and [illegible] about him? And what will they [illegible] when they see me arrive alone with [illegible]'

[illegible] under similar circumstances, would have [illegible] bitterness, that they would not even [illegible] wished. [illegible] proud, and at the same time [illegible] thought only of dissipating the anxiety of the marchioness.

'[illegible] you as far as the gate of the chateau,' replied [illegible], 'and there I will run away without being seen. You will mount the box, you will take the reins, and you will say to the domestics who come to open, that Wolf forgot himself at the cabaret, that you had good reasons not to trust him, and that you drove the carriage yourself.'

'Nobody will believe it. They know what a coward I am.'

'Fear gives courage. Between two dangers we choose the least. See, madam, I repeat proverbs to you like Sancho, to make you laugh; but you do not laugh, you are still afraid.'

'You do not understand, you do not, M. Amaury! Women are so unhappy, such slaves, so easily sacrificed in the world in which I live!'

'Unhappy, slaves, you! I thought you were all queens.'

'And what made you think so?'

'You are all so beautiful, so well dressed! You have always so animated, so happy an air!'

'Really, do you think I have such an air?'

'I have always seen you with a smile upon your lips, and your complexion is always so pure, your manners so gracious —I say this, madame the marchioness, without knowing if I express myself properly, and expecting always to make you laugh, like Sancho talking to the duchess.'

'Do not speak so to me, Amaury; it is you who have the appearance of laughing at me. You are not Sancho, and I am neither a duchess nor a real marchioness; I am the daughter of a mechanic, and I have no pretension to be anything else.'

'And yet—. But you forbid me to be Sancho, and I must not tell you all that passes in my head.'

'Oh! I know very well what you wish to say; I married a noble, is it not! I have been sufficiently reproached for it, both in his class and my own. And I have expiated it cruelly enough for God to have forgiven me!'

Amaury, who had done violence to his feelings in order to converse gaily, was too much agitated to continue in the same tone, but not bold enough to speak seriously. They both fell into a profound silence, and only understood each other the better. What had they to communicate? They had, as yet, said nothing, and yet they knew very well that they loved each other. Amaury felt that there was only a word to exchange between them; but there the courage failed on both sides.

'Mon Dieu! M. Amaury,' said the marchioness, who had returned to the back part of the carriage, 'it seems to me that we have passed the cross-road. We ought to have turned to the left. Do you know the road?' And she resumed the front seat.

'I travelled it this morning for the first time,' replied the Corinthian; 'but it seems to me that the horse will carry us right, unless he is in the same situation as myself.'

'In fact this is a horse which has just been brought from Paris. He cannot help us.'

'I think we must keep straight on.'

'No, no, we must leave the main road, and go into the lande. We have lost our way, but we shall find it in that direction.'

Nothing was more difficult than to guide their course on the lande by the cart tracks running in every direction, all alike and presenting no indication to the traveller other than certain peculiarities to which the people of the country alone were accustomed. Although Josephine had often traversed those vague paths, she could not be sufficiently sure of her

position not to take a certain thicket or a certain post for that which she thought she recognised. Moreover, the night was entirely dark; fleecy clouds veiled the feeble light of the stars, and insensibly the white mist which slept upon the pools of water spread itself over all objects, and soon prevented their distinguishing any.

This uncertain advance in the mist was not without danger. The Sologne, that vast lande which extends through the most fertile and most charming districts of central France, is a desert capriciously crossed by dry zones in which flourish magnificent heaths, and moist ones in which languish, among the reeds, waters without motion and without colour. A greyish vegetation covers those muddy lakes, more dangerous than torrents or precipices. Our travellers had wandered a long while in this labyrinth without finding an exit. The horse, deceived by appearances of beaten paths, entered into blind ones, at the end of which, stopped by bogs, he was obliged to retrace his steps. From time to time one wheel sank in a quicksand, which it was impossible to see or to avoid; the carriage then leaned over in a threatening manner, and the frightened marchioness pressed with all her strength the Corinthian's arm, uttering cries, soon succeeded by laughter, which served to conceal her shame. Amaury would have sought for these accidents could he have perceived them; but they became so frequent, and the danger so real, that it was necessary to give up going any further. The marchioness insisted upon this, for she began to be really terrified, and her driver no longer dared be sure that he would not upset her in some swamp. The horse, fatigued with travelling two hours, sometimes in the thorny furze, sometimes in clay up to his knees, stopped of his own accord and began to graze.

The marchioness said, laughingly, that she was hungry, not well knowing, I believe, what to say.

'I have some rye bread in my bag,' said Amaury: 'why can I not metamorphose it into pure wheat, that I may offer it to you?'

'Rye bread!' cried Josephine; 'oh! how fortunate! I like no other, and I have been deprived of it so long! Give me some, it will recal to me that beautiful time of my life when I was not a marchioness.'

Amaury opened his bag and took out the rye bread. Josephine broke it, and giving him half: 'I hope that you will eat with me,' said she to him.

'I never expected to sup with you, madame the marchioness,' replied Amaury, receiving with joy the bread she had touched.

'Do not call me marchioness any more,' said she, with a charming melancholy. 'We are here in the desert: may I not forget my slavery for a single hour? Ah! if you knew all that this heath recals to me! My childhood, my early sports, my dear lost liberty, sacrificed at sixteen, and for ever! I was a real peasant in those days: I ran with bare feet after the butterflies, after the birds. I was more simple than the little shepherd girls who were my associates; for they knew how to spin and knit, and I—I knew nothing; and when I undertook to watch the sheep, I was so very forgetful that I always lost some one. Would you believe that at twelve years old I did not know how to read?'

'I believe that I did not know how at fifteen,' replied Amaury.

'But how many things you have learnt in a short time! My uncle says you are more learned than his son. Certainly you are more so than I. I see well, from the odds and ends of conversations we have had together at the dance, that you have read enormously.'

'Too little to be learned, enough to be unhappy.'

'Unhappy! You also? And why, then?'

'Were you not happier when you were a little shepherdess in wooden shoes?'

'But you have not lost your liberty, you?'

'Perhaps so, mon Dieu! But if I should find it again, what good would it do me?'

'How! the world is before you, the future smiles upon you, my dear Corinthian; you have genius, you will be an artist; you will be rich perhaps, and certainly celebrated.'

'When all these dreams are realized, will they make me more happy?'

'Ah! I see how it is, you have *social ideas*, like your friend Pierre. My uncle told us last evening that Pierre had his mind quite filled with philosophical dreams. I do not know what that means, not I; you see, Amaury, that I have not so much learning as you.'

'Social ideas, I! philosophical dreams! No, truly! I no longer think of all that. My heart torments me more than my head.'

There was a moment of silence. That fraternal repast had greatly diminished the distance between them. By breaking the black bread of the workman, the marchioness had communed with him; and never did philter, formed with the most skilful preparations, produce a more magical effect upon two timid lovers.

'I am sure you are cold,' said Amaury, feeling the shudder of the marchioness, whose shoulder touched his.

'I am only a little cold in my feet,' she replied.

'I should think so; you have satin shoes on.'

'How do you know that?'

'Did you not put your foot out of the carriage to alight when I opened the door?'

'What are you doing now?'

'I am taking off my vest to wrap your feet in, I have nothing else.'

'But you will catch cold. I will never allow that. In such a mist! No, no, I will not have it.'

'Do not refuse me this favour; it is probably the only one that I shall ask of you in my whole life, madame the marchioness.'

'Ah! if you call me so again, I will listen to nothing.'

'And what can I call you?'

Josephine did not reply. The Corinthian had taken off his vest, he had left the box and had come to the door. 'If you would take the back seat,' said he to her, 'you would at least be protected by the covering of the calash; you would not have this mist on your head.'

'And you,' said Josephine; 'you mean to remain as you are, your shoulders exposed to the cold, and your feet in the wet grass?'

'I will get on the box again.'

'Then I can't talk with you any longer, you will be too far off.'

'Well, I will take a seat on this step.'

'No, get into the carriage.'

'And if the horse drags us into a pond?'

'Fasten the reins to the seat, you can quickly seize them in case of need.'

'In fact, he is busy!' said Amaury, seeing that the excellent beast was grazing without thought of evil.

'He crops the fern as I eat the rye bread,' said Josephine, laughing. 'Certainly, to him also, this lande recals youth and liberty.'

Amaury seated himself in the calash opposite the marchioness. This was the last act of respect that remained to him to perform. But the night was so fresh, and he had stripped himself to cover her feet! She made him sit by her side, in order that he might at least have a little protection against the mist. Something, indeed, told her in the bottom of her heart, that this was striking the last blow at an already vanquished man. He had defended himself courageously for two hours, and certainly she had no idea of exciting him. She thought that the timidity of a man of twenty would preserve her to the end, and that a pure and fraternal love would be sufficient for their mutual joy. But there was fear in her soul on account of the world in which she lived, and in the

soul of the Corinthian there was remorse on account of the Savinienne. Now, pure love requires a perfect calmness of conscience, and neither of them was calm. A strange shivering had seized upon her as well as upon him. They still tried to attribute it to the cold. They endeavoured to laugh and to talk; they no longer found anything to say to each other, and the Corinthian felt a sadness which bordered on bitterness. This silence became more irksome and more fearful in proportion as it was prolonged, and Josephine felt indeed that they must fly or fall.

'Do you not think,' said she with terror, 'that we could resume our route?'

'Where is our route?' said the Corinthian with a secret rage.

The marchioness saw that he suffered: she was overcome.

'In fact,' said she, 'we should only lose ourselves the more. We had better remain here patiently until day. The nights are so short at this season!'

She touched her repeater. It was midnight. And she added, to draw an answer from him:

'It will be daylight in two hours, will it not?'

'The day will come quickly enough, you may be tranquil,' replied Amaury, in a despairing voice.

That sound of his voice thrilled through Josephine. A new silence succeeded this mute burst of Amaury. The horse whinnied in sign of ennui and distress. The frogs croaked in the swamp.

Suddenly Amaury saw that Josephine wept. He threw himself at her feet; and two other hours passed in an intoxication so complete, that they forgot all, the world, the former love, the future, and fear, and the day which dawned, and the horse which had resumed his route.

A cry of terror escaped the marchioness, when she saw, by the light of the morning, a man's head advancing towards the door. This fright was very natural, but it tore the Corinthian as from a dream. And when he thought of it afterwards, he imagined that the marchioness would have felt half less fright and shame, if she had been surprised in the arms of a gentleman.

As to him, he also had a feeling of confusion before the witness of his happiness. It was Pierre Huguenin.

'Be re-assured, madame the marchioness,' said the latter on seeing Josephine's frightful paleness and wandering air. 'I am alone, and you have nothing to fear. But you must return at once to the chateau. You were expected quite far into the night. Your cousin was so anxious about you, that she sent to the city. Perhaps they are also looking for you in another direction.'

'Listen, Pierre,' said the Corinthian. 'This is what you must say: I passed the night at the city; you have not seen me; you found madame the marchioness alone, lost, run away with by her horse, about midnight——'

'That is impossible, they saw me at the chateau not half-an-hour ago!'

'But where are we, then?'

'A quarter of a league from the chateau at most. What shall I say?'

'That Wolf got intoxicated last evening, which is the truth; that he was near upsetting ten times in ten minutes; that he alighted at a cabaret in the suburb of the city—'

'Very well,' said Pierre; 'then the horse ran away and has been going over the lande all night. Now fly, Amaury; hide yourself in the furze, and don't return until towards noon. You slept in the city.'

The Corinthian hastened to alight and hide himself in the thickets. The marchioness had not strength enough to say a single word. Half fainting in the back of the carriage, she was in a nervous state which rendered very probable the story Pierre had undertaken to relate.

He took the horse by the bridle, and helped him to get out of the swamp, walking before him, and satisfying himself with his foot of the solidity of the earth he made him pass over. When they reached the chateau, the first person they saw running towards them was Yseult, who had not gone to bed, and who, from her window, was exploring all the roads since daylight.

Pierre informed her that he had found the marchioness alone in the carriage, drawn by the horse, who, after having run all night, was returning by chance; that at the first moment she had strength enough to tell him how the accident had happened, and he told on this point the story he had arranged with the Corinthian. Then he assisted Mademoiselle de Villepreux to transport her cousin to her apartment, while the domestics examined the horse's harness, which Pierre had taken the precaution to disarrange and to break in several places, in order to give the appearance of a serious revolt on his part. This poor animal was the only one calumniated in consequence of the adventure. Nobody suspected the truth. Wolf, who had seen nothing, and who did not even remember how things had passed, could not exculpate himself. He would have been dismissed, had not the marchioness, after having a nervous attack, earnestly requested that he should be forgiven. Pierre was thanked in the finest terms by the count de Villepreux. But nothing was worth so much to him as a single word from Yseult; and as he still awaited it, he was about to return sadly to the

workshop, when she approached him, extended her hand, and clasped his, before all the world, with a frank friendship of which her features confirmed the radiant expression. It was a different happiness from that of the Corinthian; but perhaps it was not less.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The bulletins of the Spanish war arrived every day more pompous for the official French army, and more alarming for the secretly organized army of carbonarism.

The capitulation of Malaga had followed close upon that of Trocadero. Riego still held out, waiting for the same king who had tremblingly offered him his lighted cigar, to send him on an ass to execution. Ballesteros was treating with the Duc d'Angoulême. Liberalism was nearly crushed in Spain, it was greatly discouraged in France.

The Count de Villepreux, whom the opposition had amused for several years, began to find the play too serious, and secretly repented that he had not confined his political part to parliamentary struggles. Far from receiving Achille Lefort's visit with his usual benevolence, he was frequently rough with him, and endeavoured by his railleries to give him a disgust of propagandism. This was not an easy thing. In spite of Pierre Huguenin's unanswerable objections, which he forgot as soon as he had heard them, Achille had but one idea in his head: this was to form a *vente* at Villepreux. He had five or six affiliates, he still required nine or ten to attain the desired number; and he did not despair of soon finding them, in spite of the discouraging effect of the telegraphic news. He was one of those blindly devoted and presumptuously brave natures, which from the fact of believing in themselves, at last come to doubt of nothing. The more he saw the ranks thinned about him, the more did he flatter himself that he could fill them with fresh champions, better nerved for resistance. He therefore exerted himself to recruit right and left with more zeal than wisdom, not perceiving too well, the good young man, that he did less good to his cause by his heated declamations and his stormy haste, than he would have done with prudence and a little skill.

Achille, supposing that an affiliate of the supreme vente would not dare throw obstacles in his way, had therefore established his head-quarters at Villepreux, using and abusing the pretext of selling wines and settling accounts, enduring

with heroism the biting contradictions of his host, who began to treat him rather cavalierly, and before whom he did not raise his voice so high as he had done in the park, when he declaimed before Pierre Huguenin against the *numskulls of the Chamber.*

In spite of the vexation which he occasioned him, the count nevertheless kept on terms with this *varlet*, who had warmly served his popularity in the province; and when he feared having wounded him, he brought him back by adroit flatteries given under the mask of a paternal roughness. The old liberalism flattered the youth of that day, waiting till, ascending in its turn the benches of the peerage, it should send them to prison to expiate the crime of secret association, a holy and sacred thing under the restoration, illegal and abominable under Louis Philippe.

At evening, when the ordinary and extraordinary guests of the chateau had retired, Achille, having returned from his political excursions, came to give an account of all the work he had done. He did the count the honour to consider him as his superior, and the count was obliged to accept that character. Yseult was not excluded from these conversations. Besides that her grandfather had an entire confidence in her, the reports of the various suits brought against carbonarism had initiated her into all the mysteries of the permanent conspiracy. While still a child, she had been launched into into these dreams of political struggle; and, like all young heads, her own had become exalted even to masculine bravery without losing that shade of ideal romance which characterizes a great feminine nature. I cannot tell you if she was really, as they pretended, a daughter of Napoleon; but it is certain that there was something heroic in the turn of her mind, and an extreme originality in the independence of her character.

With these dispositions, she must needs incline towards the opinion of Achille Lefort, and become bolder in her hopes as the danger increased. Between the old count and the young carbonaro, she was as the pure mirror of truth, in which each of them could see the stains or the errors of his conscience thrown back by the impenetrable crystal. She always listened to her grandfather with respect; but when she saw him falter, she sought the cause elsewhere than in a want of courage, and her candour intimidated the old man. When Achille allowed himself to be carried away by his presumption, she imagined he had had some extraordinary success in his enterprises; and he, quite ashamed of the faith she had in him, blushed to feel that this faith had a poor foundation. The count would have preferred not to have her present at their interviews; but Achille, knowing very well the ascen-

dancy she exercised over him, took care to find them together in order to make his reports, and then M. de Villepreux did not dare display all his vexation and all his repugnance.

It often happened that they spoke of Pierre Huguenin. Achille said he would be one of the best conquests he could make for his vente; that there would be some difficulty in overcoming his objections, but that when once engaged they would find him a hero. Yseult said that she had the highest opinion of him, and that she should, with joy, see him enter upon frequent communications with her grandfather, and derive from those relations that political instruction for which so fine an understanding thirsted. Yseult still imagined that her grandfather bore within him some great revelation of the social idea which tormented the mechanic philosopher.

'Your Pierre Huguenin is a madman,' said the count to them one evening, when driven to extremity; 'a deranged head, to be put in the same category with the cracked brain of M. Lefort. It is doubtless good that the common people should read Jean Jacques Rousseau and Montesquieu. I don't laugh at that, my daughter, do you understand? I am sure it will produce something good. But let us give them time for digestion. What, the devil! they have barely swallowed the manna when they are told to find the promised land! The people of Moses required forty years for that, forty years which, in Biblical language, perhaps mean forty centuries, you must know. Leave them alone, then; they ask only that. Are they far enough advanced to have anything to do with politics? It is for us to seek what is most fitted for them, and to secure to them the best possible lot without consulting them; for they cannot yet decide their own case. They would be judge and party!'

'Are we not all in the same situation?' asked Yseult.

'But our education is completed; we have ideas of justice founded upon a certain science which they have not yet, and and will not have very soon. Let us give them time to ascend to us, and let us not be so foolish as to descend to them. It is not necessary we should dirty our hands to please them; they must wash theirs in order to resemble us.'

'But an immense political crisis is required, in order that they may have the time and the instinct to civilize themselves,' cried Lefort.

'So, my dear sir, we will bring about the crisis in fitting time and place, but without their assisting us too knowingly; for, in that case, they would dictate the law to us on the next day, and that would be barbarism.'

'But, father,' said Yseult, 'it seems to me that we might educate and assist them to become civilized, in the meanwhile.'

'Most assuredly,' cried the count. 'In everything that does not openly relate to politics, we must extend the hand to them, encourage them, procure for them employment and instruction, excite in them the feeling of human dignity. Do I act otherwise with them? Do I not treat them as my equals? Do I compel them to remain standing while they talk with me? Do I not seek to develope all the germs of intelligence I perceive in them?'

'Certainly, M. the count,' said Achile, 'your individual conduct is generous and frankly liberal; but why are you unwilling that a certain initiation into the political movement should be a means of education for the intelligent and courageous proletaries? Do you then believe that Pierre Huguenin does not understand what we are about as well as I do?'

'That is not saying much, perhaps,' replied the count, laughing, 'and even yet he is not there; the proof is, that he repels you and makes you entreat him.'

Some days after this conversation, Yseult, walking in the park with Achille, and talking at the moment about Pierre Huguenin, saw the latter coming towards them from the direction of the workshop. 'I have a desire to address him,' said she, 'and to see if I shall not succeed better than you. I should be proud to effect his conversion, and to be able to announce it to my grandfather this evening.'

'I fear very much that M. the count no longer cares for any political conversion,' replied Achille, who was himself somewhat discouraged on that day.

'You are mistaken, sir,' replied Yseult, who did not cease to see in her grandfather a patriarch of the revolution; 'I know his inclinations better than you do. He has severe attacks of sadness; but a good word, a generous sentiment, the least act of courage and patriotism, such for instance, as Pierre Huguenin's adhesion to your projects, would be sufficient to re-awaken that noble enthusiasm which we know is in him. Are you willing to call Pierre, that I may talk with him? Would you advise me to it?'

'Why not?' replied Achille, whose self-love was somewhat interested in overcoming the proud refusals of the mechanic. 'A woman's eloquence may do miracles!'

He ran to seek him. But, instead of bringing him to mademoiselle de Villepreux, and remaining as a third in the conversation, as she expected, he withdrew, fearing lest his presence should restore to Pierre the strength of argumentation, and depending somewhat on the confusion and embarrassment which a tête-à-tête with the young chatelaine must needs produce in him.

On seeing herself decidedly alone with Pierre, Yseult was

herself seized with a timidity before unknown to her, and remained for some moments without being able to enter upon the subject. Pierre was so confused on his part, that he did not perceive it, and he attributed to the buzzing which he heard in his ears the interrupted and incomprehensible meaning of Yseult's first words. At last they both succeeded in becoming calm and understanding each other. Yseult spoke to him with that exaltation of patriotism which had, at that period, its current phraseology, more glittering in words than rich in facts and ideas. Nevertheless, the distinction which good taste and grace of mind knew how to give to her expressions, her elegant and melodious diction, the voice of an agitated and persuaded woman, the pure and deep feeling which impelled the young girl in this act of proselytism, threw so great a charm into her discourse, that Pierre, overcome and transported, felt his face bathed in tears. We must also make allowance for the ingenuousness of the hearer, and for love, which had there introduced his delicate and trembling shaft. There was no resistance possible against such an assault, no distrust before a such conviction, no plebeian pride to rebel so touching a seduction. His reason received a violent shock. With his limited experience, and at the age when sentiment governs the whole being, it was impossible that he should not yield at discretion. Yseult, receiving blindly the double-sided theories of her grandfather, and seeing only the beautiful face of his intentions and promises, endeavoured to remove the prejudices of Pierre by persuading him of what she herself believed: that the old man prudently concealed the ardour of his republicanism, while waiting for the day when he could bring it into practice.

'I was deceived,' said Pierre to himself, as he listened to her, 'I have been unjust towards the father and teacher of such a daughter. The soul of a coward and a traitor could not have formed this heroine, brave as Joan of Arc, eloquent as madame de Staël. Yes, I endeavoured to close my eyes to the light, and my repugnances were only the blindness of pride.' The people has its friends in the higher classes, it misunderstands and repels them. We are deaf and coarse,—I, first of all, who have misunderstood this voice from heaven and resisted this superhuman power.'

These reflections came to the lips of Pierre Huguenin without his being conscious of what he said, so much was his soul elevated and inundated by joy and love.

'Then you distrusted us?' said the young patrician to him; 'you did not appreciate my father, the most sincere and the greatest of men? But do you distrust me who am speaking to you, master Pierre? Do you believe that one can deceive at my age? Do you not feel that there is in the

depths of my heart an inextinguishable thirst for justice and equality? Do you not know that all the books which have formed your mind have formed mine also? What a perverse being should I be then if I could have read Jean Jacques and Franklin without being penetrated with the truth! Do you believe that I have not made my father relate to me those great epochs of the revolution in which the men of destiny pursued and defended the principle of popular sovereignty at the expense of their lives, their reputations and their own hearts, tearing, from their bosoms, by a sublime effort, every human feeling in order to save humanity? Yes, my grandfather understands all that, and admires all those men, from Mirabeau to Robespierre, from Barnave to Danton. And, besides, do you believe I have drawn no instruction from Christianity? We women are born and grow up in catholicism, whatever may be the philosophy of our fathers. Well! the gospel has for us great lessons of fraternal equality, which men are perhaps unacquainted with; and, for myself I adore in the Christ his obscure birth, his humble apostles, his poverty and his freedom from all human pride, all the popular and divine poem of his life crowned by martyrdom. If I withdraw from the church, it is because the priests, by making themselves the ministers of temporal power and the agents of despotism, have become traitors to the thought of their master, and altered the spirit of his doctrine. But I, I feel ready to practice it to the letter. No suffering, no poverty, no labour, will repel me, if necessary to enable me to share the sorrows of the people. No dungeon, no punishment will terrify me, if necessary to proclaim my faith. No, Pierre, I swear to you that I have never thought of my riches and my liberty without feeling remorse, on account of the poor who are forgotten, and the prisoners who are tortured. I have sometimes fallen into errors of judgment; I have yielded to the habits of luxury; I have uttered words consecrated in the world by custom and prejudice. But if it were necessary to do something great, if it were necessary to give my life as an expiation for those hours of ignorance and apathy, believe me, I should thank God for freeing me from all these miserable bonds in which my soul languishes and blushes at itself. I do not say all these things to boast of myself before you, but that you may know how my grandfather has educated me, and what sentiments he has instilled into my heart. Do you believe them sincere?'

Pierre was intoxicated, out of his senses. The fever which burned in Yseult's veins passed into his. Both believed themselves transported by faith alone, and that they had at this moment no other bond than that of virtue. Still it was

love which had assumed this form, and undertaken to kindle in them the flame of revolutionary enthusiasm.

'Do with me what you will,' said Pierre. 'Ask of me my life—that is saying too little—dispose of my conscience, I will believe in you as in God; I will allow myself to be led blindfold; if you will deign only to say a few words to me to re-animate my faith and my hope—'

'Faith, hope, and charity,' replied Yseult, 'that is the device of the association you are requested to join. Is there any more beautiful?'

Pierre promised everything; and, when Achille rejoined them, Yseult presented him as a brother acquired for the holy cause. The astonishment and joy of the travelling clerk were at their height, when Pierre confirmed his submission by a solemn promise. 'I begin to believe that *Mademoiselle de Bonaparte* is a master woman,' cried Lefort, rubbing his hands when Yseult had retired. '*Vive Dieu*! I have changed my opinion respecting her, master Pierre! She has been admirable in all the attacks we have made upon grand papa; she is a real mountaineer. Her little finger [illegible] more than all the rest of the family. The [illegible] your place, I should not fall in love with h[illegible]

Achille's prosaism, upon this matter, was very irksome [illegible] Pierre Huguenin. 'Do not laugh at me, I beg of you,' replied he, 'and do not speak lightly of a person who is above us both by her mind and her character.'

'Oh ho! I did not think I should hit so true,' returned Achille, struck by the emotion of the young mechanic. 'But why do you think I laugh at you, friend Pierre? Has not our age finally entered upon the path of reason and philosophy? Do you think that a person so frankly republican as mademoiselle de Villepreux must not consider a man like you absolutely her equal? I assure you, and I can do it, that she appreciates you perfectly, and that she has not the shadow of a prejudice, especially now that you are one of us, and that carbonarism will bring you into correspondence at every moment of your life, and upon all points of politics—'

'You are nothing but an exploiter!' cried Pierre, deeply irritated at the frivolity with which Achille played with the secret of his soul; 'yes, you exploit all things, even the most sacred. In order to gain me to your cause, you do not blush to excite in me the most foolish and the most absurd ideas; but do you think I am stupid enough to let myself be taken by them?'

Achille did not allow himself to be rebuffed by the pride of his friend, and, without caring for his resistance, he compelled him to listen to all the good Yseult said of him.

Achille did not lie; only he related brutally, and inter-

preted events with an incredible boldness. Pierre suffered while listening to him, but he did listen; and an irresistible joy, an insensate hope struck, in spite of him, the last blow upon his reason. He passed that night and the following days in a sort of delirium; and Achille, who had undertaken to indoctrinate him every day, perceived that he did not listen, that he thought neither of philosophy nor of politics, but that, overpowered by passion, he was in his hands like a child.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Achille, not knowing how to complete his vente, had indeed turned his eyes towards the Corinthian; but the latter felt only aversion for [illegible], and Pierre advised the propagandist to think of any other [illegible]

The Corinthian [illegible] understanding that there was a political bond between the Count de Villepreux and Achille Lefort, and not imagining that the latter had anything to do with [illegible] at the chateau, had got it into his head that he was detained there by the beautiful eyes of the marchioness [illegible] certain that, in the midst of his revolutionary preoccupations, Achille was not so much absorbed that [illegible] beauty had not struck and somewhat agitated his brain. He made for her sake toilets almost as ridiculous as those of Isidore, but after a different style. He took advantage of his thick hair and his black whiskers *a la [illegible]*, to make for himself a head *a caractere*; and as he was very well in his person and might pass in a province for a pretty youth, as he had a facility in expressing himself, and a kind of table d'hôte eloquence which might easily produce an effect upon a person so little enlightened as Josephine, we could not affirm that he would absolutely have lost his pains, had he reached the chateau a week sooner. But Josephine was in such a disposition of mind that she no longer dared to raise her eyes upon any one. Dismayed at her fall, frightened at everything, she kept herself almost constantly in her chamber since the adventure of the mists; and Amaury, the victim of a thousand anxieties, passing from gratitude to vexation, and from hope to jealousy, did not know if he should ever be allowed to see her again. He no longer perceived her but at a distance, through the trees. After dinner, the family took coffee upon a terrace covered with orange trees, which Amaury could see from the workshop. At that

hour, he always had some work to do on the windows; and, mounted on a ladder, he looked down upon the terrace, followed all the movements of the languishing marchioness, and remarked very clearly the earnest attentions of which she was the object on the part of Achille Lefort. He felt great need of opening his heart to his friend Pierre, and of asking his advice; the more that he had nothing to reveal to him, since chance had initiated him into the secret of his love. But Pierre seemed to avoid his confidences. Himself the victim of a dream from which he feared to be compelled to awaken, he buried himself in solitude as soon as his day's work was done. He wandered in the park in the same places where he had met Yseult, not daring to hope to meet her again; and meeting her there almost always, either with Achille Lefort, and coming directly towards him, or alone, appearing not to seek him, and yet not avoiding him. Their conversations always turned upon general ideas. No external familiarity had been established between them; but the intimacy of heart increased and gained strength. There was a mutual esteem and admiration which found each day new aliments and new causes.

In that portion of the park the vegetation was very thick, and there was no danger of being troubled by the malignant interpretations of the curious. It was a quarter closed by a slight barrier, and devoted to the cultivation of the beautiful flowers in which Yseult delighted. Guests, relatives and domestics were accustomed to respect this reserved park, and never to enter it whether the gate was open or shut. There was in it an aviary and a fountain in the middle of a grass plot, interspersed with beds of flowers. Around this piece of turf a double row of trees and shrubs formed a circular alley. A wooden trellis enclosed the whole. Pierre usually met Mademoiselle de Villepreux at a short distance from this enclosure. When she was with Achille, she invited both to enter. When she was alone, she walked several times in front of the entrance gate with Pierre; and when she judged that the interview had been long enough, she entered her garden, after having wished him good evening with a simple and chaste grace which Pierre understood and respected even to adoration. Then he rapidly withdrew and went to await her coming at the end of the alley, concealed in a clump of trees. He was happy at seeing her pass; and when the night was too dark to distinguish her slight form, he was still happy at hearing the rustling of her dress upon the grass. For nothing in the world would Pierre have wished to approach her at that moment. He felt the value of the confidence she reposed in him by meeting him always with benevolence, and he understood what was proper and was not, much better

than certain persons to whom constant communication with the world never gives either tact or moderation. Thus, he made, respecting these walks and meetings, observations as delicate as could have been made by a man of the most exquisite manners. He remarked, among other things, that as Mademoiselle de Villepreux never entered the reserved park alone with him, so neither did she enter it alone with Achille. On the days when he arrived last at these tacit rendezvous (which was very seldom,) he found her with the young carbonaro, walking up and down the outer alley: and when they three had made several turns together, she said gaily: 'Let us go and see the birds!' Then they went into the garden; and, if Pierre testified any hesitation, she insisted upon his entering.

One evening, Pierre, who, in spite of himself, retained a slight jealous suspicion, hid himself in his accustomed retreat; it was a large tufted maple, which grew from a clump and leaned over the alley. By climbing this tree he was perfectly concealed, and could see and hear everything. He saw Yseult arrive with Achille, he saw them pass and repass beneath him; he heard them talk, as on other days, of conspiracy, revolution, constitution. There was a moment when Achille stopped under the maple, saying:

'It seems we shall not see our friend Pierre this evening.'

'That is singular,' replied Yseult, 'for we see him almost every evening. He is greedy of your teachings.'

'Or rather of yours, mademoiselle.'

'Mine! What can I teach him? It much rather seems to me that I learn a great deal by conversing with that man of the people, who appears to me really wise and turned to great things. Does he not appear the same to you, M. Lefort?'

Achille had guessed Yseult's secret. He favoured this mysterious inclination by pretending not to perceive anything. He was led to this, not only in view of his carbonarism, but by the real affection he felt for Pierre; and then by the attraction which an adventure of this kind always has for young minds; and then perhaps, in fine, by the pleasure of thus avenging himself in a certain manner for the contempt of the old count. He was there as a kind of sentimental go-between in a romance the most chaste and the most serious, while it was at the same time the most senseless and the least realizable. To look upon that romance from the broad point of view of natural justice and of philosophical reason, there could be nothing more moral and more elevated; to look at it through the narrow loop-hole of custom and of social proprieties, it was something absurd and revolting. Achille saw both faces, admiring the one and being amused at the other,

with that deep rancour which the citizen race cherish against the partrician.

He therefore omitted no opportunity of bringing the chatelaine and the mechanic in contact. It was he who, at the hour of the grandfather's daily siesta, led the young daughter, from one political argument to another, as far as the alley of the reserved park. It was therefore owing to him that Pierre heard with what sympathy Yseult expressed herself respecting him. He was astonished at the ardour with which Lefort excelled her in praising him, and he remarked that nothing was said about going to see the birds. When it was quite night, and they had lost all hope of seeing him, they returned to the chateau; and Pierre, freed from his jealousy, drunk with joy, went to sup at his father's with the Berrichon, whom he found witty, and old Lacrête, who seemed a genius, so inclined was he to benevolence that evening. 'Well and good,' said father Huguenin to him, 'now you are joyous and a good boy! Do you know, Pierre, that you often put on too grand airs with your family? You have too much to do with the nobles, my child; that spoils the heart and the mind.'

There was then no stranger at the chateau but Lefort. M. Lerebours was busy in the press-house overseeing the fermentation of the new vintage. Raoul passed his life in the neighbouring chateaux, where he found more amusement, and where he was not obliged to be on his guard in order not to *cuff* that *dirty philosopher*, that *philanthropist of the gutter*, that *tavern orator*,—in a word, that *bore of a Lefort*.

There are hours of impunity in chateau life which pass all probability. The two young ladies were going through one of those phases in which everything seems to favour the forgetfulness of the world and the flights of the imagination. One evening Josephine was weeping, with her elbow resting upon the window-sill. She desired to see the Corinthian again, but she did not dare to; she was not sure that everybody had not guessed her secret, and she asked herself which she must choose, the contempt of the world, or that of the man whom she abandoned, after having abandoned herself to him. Suddenly she heard a dull noise behind a little door cut in the wainscotting of her alcove, and which had perhaps protected the loves of some chatelaine of the time of the League with some happy page, during the absence of the warring husband. That door opened into a passage which, in the thickness of the walls, made several turns around the chateau, and finished without issue. This mysterious passage had been walled up, being looked upon as useless. But a trap situated in the wainscotting of the chapel had led the ardent Corinthian from discovery to discovery, and from rubbish to rubbish

as far as this closing wall. By means of calculating and measuring his distances, he had divined that a certain secret door, situated in the apartment of the marchioness, and of which mademoiselle Julie, her chambermaid, sometimes spoke in the kitchen as a retreat for ghosts, must open exactly at the spot where he was stopped. He had taken a lamp, a bar, and a hammer, and buried himself in the labyrinth. He had been three days at work piercing the wall. The noise of his hammer was deadened by the thickness of the masonry. It was a painful and palpitating enterprise, like that of a prisoner who works to effect his escape. When the wall was pierced the noise became audible, and the marchioness, who was no less superstitious than her chambermaid, was seized with such a fright that she fled to the bottom of the staircase to call for help; but I know not what instinct of prudence prevented her from yielding to this fear, and from mentioning it in the saloon, where the family always assembled from ten o'clock to midnight after the count's siesta.

During this time, Amaury had opened the breach and reached the secret door. He found it locked inside; but having shaken it and satisfied himself that the noise attracted no one, he opened it with a wire. Now, certain of his victory, he locked the door with a double turn, and carried away the key.

When he returned to the workshop, he hastened to repair the panel of which he alone had discovered the mysterious use. He replaced it himself, so that no one should touch it and become associated with him in his secret; but he so arranged it that he could remove it without difficulty or noise whenever he wished; and, this enterprise accomplished, triumphing in his thought of the terrors of the marchioness, and defying Achille Lefort to supplant him, or at least to deceive him, he rejoined Pierre Huguenin, at the moment when the latter received from his father, for the hundredth time, the advice to distrust the good offices of the nobility.

Thenceforth, the Corinthian tasted a terrible happiness, and one which decided the rest of his life. Protected by the impunity secured by his discovery of the secret passage, he knew love in all its power, and in all its refinement. It was the first time that Josephine had been loved, and it was the only time that she loved. Certainly, their passion had not the ideal and the really angelic chastity of that which Yseult and Pierre Huguenin experienced. While these last overcame attraction and even the thought of pleasure by the enthusiasm of their minds and the austerity of their faith, the Corinthian and the marchioness, subjugated by the energy of their passion, were intoxicated with their mutual youth

and their equal beauty. But at least it was a sincere love, and in a certain manner pure; for they believed in each other and they believed in themselves. They swore to each other a fidelity of which the feeling was in them, and there were moments of exaltation in which the marchioness dreamt of a sublime courage to proclaim Amaury her lover and her husband in the face of the whole world, on the day when the Marquis des Frenays, yielding to the premature infirmities which threatened him, should leave her free to form a new tie. Amaury did not look at the future under this aspect; he cared little if the Marquis des Frenays chose to live or die, and if Josephine could become reconciled with society and with the Church. He did not remember that she was rich; he had a profound contempt for riches not acquired by his own talents. He saw in her only a young, beautiful and impassioned woman; he adored her thus, and besought her to love him always, he swearing to render himself soon worthy of the happiness she had granted him, and of the confidence she had in his star. The idea of glory was connected in his mind with that of his love. There was in him a pride full of boldness and of gratitude.

Certainly, this feeling had in itself nothing culpable or insensate. But it soon had the fate of all the intoxications into which a man plunges without an ideal of virtue or of religion. We have all indeed the right to be happy, to aspire to works of genius and the suffrages of mankind. We are allowed to be proud of the object of our love, and to count upon the victories of our intelligent will. But this is not all the life of man; and, if the love of self is not closely bound to the love of our kind, this ambition, which might have triumphed over all obstacles in the state of devotedness, suffers, becomes embittered, and threatens to fall at every step, when it remains in the state of selfishness. Love, which extends this selfishness to two beings melted into one alone, is not enough to legitimatize it. It is beautiful and divine as a means, as a help, and as an ægis; it is poor and miserable as an object and an only end.

The Corinthian was not selfish, in the low and mean acceptation given to this vice. As a friend he was tender and devoted; as a companion he had always shown himself serviceable and generous; as a lover, he was neither ungrateful nor proud; he remained respectful and repentant in his heart towards the Savinienne. But his soul was more impetuous than strong, his genius more grasping than powerful. He bore in his bosom all the dangerous curiosities, all the insatiable desires of youth. It was therefore a misfortune for him to meet with the love of Josephine in the midst of the developement of his being, at that hour of life in which we

receive from circumstances a decisive impulse without having the strength necessary to appreciate, direct or combat it. Perhaps the virtuous and solid Pierre Huguenin would not have been better tempered for such a trial. Perhaps he would not have loved in a more exquisite manner, if, instead of meeting an apostolic soul like Yseult's, he had been exposed to the same seductions as his friend. However this may be, the Corinthian was rapidly corrupted in his happiness, and poor Josephine, even while bringing to it all the yielding and ingenuousness of her gentle character, was to him the fatal apple which, from the celestial garden of adolescence, was to send him forth in exile to the arid desert of positive life.

Achille had left the château for a season. He had found that he could organize a vente more easily on the side of Poitou, and he had gone thither at the call of some brother of the fraternity as tenacious as himself in the support of carbonarism, now ready to perish. He was nevertheless to return for the purpose of completing and consecrating that of Villepreux, which he did not renounce the least in the world, and which he wished to baptize, in order to please Mademoiselle de Villepreux, *La Jean-Jacques Rousseau.*

His departure filled with sorrow and fear the heart of Pierre Huguenin. He imagined that he should no longer have an opportunity or a reason for meeting Yseult in the park. But suddenly Providence, or rather the modest complicity of love, suggested happy pretexts for new interviews.

A storm had overthrown the aviary of the reserved park. Yseult appeared extraordinarily attached to her birds, and she asked Pierre Huguenin to construct a new abode for them. He at once made a plan of a pretty little temple of wood and brass wire, which was to enclose the basin and the fountain, with its great margins of turf, of reeds, and moss for the aquatic birds. Shrubs of quite a large size were to be contained entire in this spacious cage; climbing plants were to envelope it with an external net of verdure; lastly a great parasol of zinc was to protect from the rain and too great heat of the sun the delicate birds of foreign regions.

The impatience which Yseult testified to see the erection of this ornithological monument induced father Huguenin to consent that his son and the Berrichon should devote themselves to it for some days. A fortnight was to be enough for this work, but it lasted a great while longer.

At first the Berrichon understood nothing about it. It did no good for him to affirm that Pierre was more difficult than usual, and to delare that it was unjust to make him recommence minutely some parts which he had arranged with all possible care; Pierre, proving to him with gentleness, but

with perseverance, that this work was too delicate for him, employed him only in preparing the pieces at the workshop, and in running in every direction on a thousand commissions every day. He sent him three times to the neighbouring city for some iron wire. The first was too fine, the second too coarse, the third was neither fine enough nor coarse enough. At least, it was thus the Berrichon, in his naive dissatisfaction, related the matter to the Corinthian, to the latter's great amusement. The fact was, that when the Berrichon was with Pierre the whole day, Mademoiselle de Villepreux came to examine the work only once or twice, and when Pierre was alone she came three or four times, and remained longer. She was not alone at the beginning. The marchioness or her father accompanied her, and the gardener was almost always in the garden. But by degrees she became accustomed to come alone, and to remain, even after sunset and the gardener's departure. Pierre saw clearly that she began to free herself, without noticing it, from the yoke of proprieties to which she had hitherto been blindly submissive. He was at first grateful to her for this observance for he had comprehended that she did not treat him as a thing but as a man, and that this chaste reserve indicated, not a distrust, but a kind of respect for his position: it was like a long and delicate reparation which she gave him for the memorable speech of the turret. When she forgot this assumed part, and no longer feared to remain alone with him in the reserved park, he was still more grateful to her for this freedom; since it was the mark of a holy confidence and almost fraternal tranquillity of soul. Pierre, far from suffering at these calm and pure relations, blessed and cherished them, not dreaming of others, and not aspiring to the dangerous happiness which fevered the Corinthian. He loved too much to desire. Yseult appeared to him like a celestial being whom he would have feared to profane by simply grazing the fold of her dress. He indeed trembled in all his body at seeing her approaching from the end of the alley, and his hand could then hardly sustain the weight of his hammer or his [illegible]. When he heard her name him, a burning blush covered his face; and if sometimes the visions of the night brought her image to him in the midst of an involuntary delirium, a kind of sorrowing shame bowed his head the next day, and kept his eyes cast down in her presence. But when she spoke to him, she stirred his whole soul, and made him again ascend into those high regions of enthusiasm, where there is no longer either confusion or terror, because there is there the feeling of an intellectual hymen as legitimate as it is indissoluble.

No one thought of blaming these relations, or rather no one had remarked them. It was known that the count had

educated his daughter in the ideas and customs of a certain equality with everybody. Besides the habits of independence which he had given her, that philosophical education which some called *English* and others *a l'Emile*, and which had made of her a person so natural and so calm, averted all unpleasant suppositions. The servants as well as neighbours had an instinctive respect or indifference for that grave and solitary humour which they did not comprehend, and which they attributed to an organic languor. Her paleness had caused it to be said of her, ever since she was in the world: 'That child will not live.' And yet she had never been ill; but as she had not had the impetuous gaiety of childhood, it was not supposed that her passions would ever be developed, and that having forgotten to be a little girl she would ever think of becoming a woman. Such was the opinion of those who had seen her infancy and growth. As to those who, not knowing her, saw in her only the pretended daughter of the emperor, they would willingly have built respecting her romances more beautiful in their opinion, than an intrigue with a journeyman joiner.

It happened that at the village fête Pierre heard some indiscreetly curious remarks upon this subject, and could not help taking them up. The next day, while he was at work on the aviary, Yseult came, as usual, to play with her tame roebuck, which lived in the reserved park, and to feed the young birds she was bringing up in temporary cages. Then she took her book, and walked several times along her flowery borders; and at last she came towards Pierre, to whom she had simply said, 'Good day,' and seemed determined to enter into conversation. Pierre saw very well that there was something unusual in her manner; for she was accustomed to approach him more openly, to ask about his father, and to relate the news of the gazettes while he assisted her to unfasten the roebuck, or to open the cages.

'Master Pierre,' said she to him, smiling significantly, 'I have a fancy to-day it is to know what is said of me in the neighbourhood.'

'How could I inform you, mademoiselle?' replied Pierre, surprised and intimidated at this request.

'Oh! you could do so very well,' replied she good-humouredly, 'for you know; and it seems that you have the goodness to be my champion, sometimes. Julie has told my cousin that you silenced, yesterday, under the arbour, two young persons who spoke of me rather singularly. But her account was so well turned that Madame des Frenays understood hardly anything of it. Could you not tell me, quite simply, what was said of me, and upon what observations you declared yourself my defender?'

'Perhaps I ought to ask your pardon for having done so?' replied Pierre, with embarassment; 'for there are persons so far above the attacks of stupidity, that it is almost an insult to defend them.'

'No matter,' returned Mademoiselle de Villepreux, 'I know that you pleaded my cause with zeal, and I am grateful for it; but I wish to know of what I was accused. Really, do not refuse to satisfy my curiosity.'

Pierre was more and more troubled, and did not know how to relate the affair. Yseult insisted with a gay sang froid which was peculiar to her, and, in order to hear better, came near and seated herself composedly upon a rustic chair, with a certain half sisterly, half queen-like manner, which she alone in the world knew how to preserve in the smallest actions of her life. Forced in his last entrenchments, and feeling indeed that he ought to give an account of his conduct in a circumstance when he had publicly spoken of her, he armed himself with resolution; and, endeavouring to be cheerful, though he trembled and suffered a thousand tortures, he thus related to her the anecdote of the day before: 'I was seated under the arbour with the Corinthian and some others of my friends, when several young persons, lawyers' clerks and sons of farmers in the neighbourhood, came to drink beer beside us. They spoke to us first, and after many idle questions, they asked us if the young ladies of the chateau danced at the village fêtes, and if they could be asked. You had just passed near the arbour with M. the count and madame the Marchioness des Frenays. The Corinthian took upon himself to answer that neither of you danced. I do not know if he did well, and if it would not have been better to have replied that he knew nothing about it. At least this is what I should have answered in his place. One of those persons then said, that Madame des Frenays danced every Sunday in the warren with the peasants, that he was very sure of it, and even that he had been told she danced charmingly. The Corinthian did not like the face of that person; it is certain that he had quite an impertinent tone, and that, every time he put his elbow on the table, he disarranged our cloth and made something fall. The Berrichon had picked up his knife three times, and he lost patience even more than the Corinthian. And as that person, who is, I believe, a horse-dealer, insisted always on the same point, and said that Amaury had answered him improperly, the Berricohn took part in the conversation, and pretended that, if the marchioness did dance with the people of the village, it was no reason why she should dance with strangers. But really, I do not see, mademoiselle, how this story can interest you.'

'It interests me a great deal, on the contrary, and I request

you to continue,' said Yseult. And, as Pierre hesitated, she added, to assist him: 'Those fine gentlemen then said, 'that if we did not dance with strangers, we were impertinent minxes. Come, tell me everything; you see very well that it amuses, and cannot vex me.'

'Well, so be it! They did say that, since you absolutely wish to know.'

'And they said something else besides?'

'I do not remember.'

'Ah! you are deceiving me, master Pierre! They said of me in particular that I was wrong to play the princess, for my history was well known.'

'That is true,' said Pierre, blushing.

'But I myself wish to know my history! That is what interests me, and what that stupid Julia could not be persuaded to tell my cousin.'

Pierre was on the rack. The history interested him much more than it did Yseult. What would he not have given to know the truth! An opportunity was at last presented to learn it from the replies of Mademoiselle de Villepreux, or to guess it from her countenance; but it seemed to him that in articulating the fact he should allow the agitation of his soul to be seen, and that his secret would come to his lips, or into his eyes. At last he took his part with a despairing courage. 'Well, since you exact it of me, I shall repeat it,' said he, 'they pretended that you had wished to marry a young savant who was tutor to Monsieur your brother, that the young man was driven away in disgrace, and that you almost died of sorrow.'

'And that, but for this catastrophe,' returned Yseult, who listened with a terrible sang-froid, 'I should have preserved the complexion of lilies and roses which are seen to bloom upon my cousin's cheeks?'

'They did say something like that.'

'And what did you answer to this last head of their accusations?'

'I might have answered that I had seen you at five or six years old, and that you were as pale then as you are now; but I did not think of denying the effect, so busy was I in denying the cause?'

'Do you really remember to have seen me when a child, master Pierre?'

'The first time you came here, you had your hair short as a little boy's, but it was as black as it is now; you always wore a white dress with a black girdle, in consequence of your mourning for your father: you see that I have a good memory. 'And I remember that you brought me two ring-doves in a

cage, and that you made the cage yourself. I gave you a picture-book, an abridgment of natural history.'

'Which I have still!'

'Oh! really? But this is a digression which will not make me lose sight of what I wish to know. What did you reply to those persons?'

'That they did not know what they were talking about, and that there was but little invention in their romances.'

'And then they were vexed?'

'A little. But when they saw that we were not in the least afraid of them, they left the table, saying that the mistake was on their part, because when they seated themselves by the side of clowns they ought to have expected to be *spattered*. If I had not held the Berrichon by main force I believe we should have fought. I should have been much grieved had such a thing happened in consequence of a conversation in which you had been named.'

Yseult smiled with an air of thankfulness, and remained silent for some moments. It is impossible to express all that Pierre suffered while waiting for her remarks. At last she spoke, and said to him, with a serious air:

'Now, master Pierre, tell me why you were indignant at the accusation brought against me? Would the fact of my having wished to marry a little schoolmaster appear to you so shameful and so criminal that it was necessary, for the sake of denying it, to expose yourself to tell a falsehood?'

Pierre became pale and did not answer. He heard nothing of the question full of clearness which was addressed to him; he thought only of the passion she seemed to confess, and which precipitated him from heaven to earth.

'Come,' resumed Mademoiselle de Villepruex, in that short and rather absolute tone which recalled, as was pretended, that of the emperor, 'you must answer me, master Pierre. I value my reputation, you must know, and wish to establish it clearly in the minds of persons whom I esteem. Why did you deny that I could have loved a professor of Latin. Say!'

'I did not deny it. I simply said that any kind of supposition respecting certain persons was impertinent and misplaced on the part of certain people.'

'That is very aristocratic, master Pierre; I don't go so far as you: I am, you know, for freedom of the press, for liberty of suffrage, for liberty of conscience, for all public liberties. It would, therefore, be inconsistent to ask for an exception in my favour.'

'Doubtless I was wrong to take it up in the manner I did; but I should be no wiser were the same thing to happen again. It pained me to hear your name in the mouths of those coarse boasters.'

'Well, I absolve you; but it is on condition that you will tell me what I asked you just now. In what do you blame—'

'Mon Dieu, I blame nothing!' cried Pierre, whose heart was bleeding at this play. 'If you have the idea of marrying a servant, I consider it quite as proud as to wish to marry a general, a duke, or a banker.'

'So you would not be my champion under such circumstances? You would accuse me, on the contrary?'

'Accuse you! I? never! You have certainly quite enough great things in your soul to be forgiven for some little caprice of your mind.'

'Well, I like your answer; and I like your judgment upon my Odyssey with the professor. It seems to me a higher view than could be taken by any person of my acquaintance. It is strange, master Pierre, that having never seen what is called the world, you understand it better than the people who compose it. Founding yourself upon pure logic and absolute wisdom, you have unmasked a great error by which most men and women of these times allow themselves to be deceived..

'May I ask you what one? for it appears I have hit upon it by chance.'

'Well, this is it: Romances are all the fashion. The women of the world read them, and then they put them in practice the most they can, and there is nothing at all romantic in that. There is not one true affection in the thousand adventures which are attributed to the most exalted love. Thus we see elopements, duels, marriages opposed by parents and contracted to the great scancal of public opinion; we even see suicides, and in all these there is no more passion than I had for my brother's tutor. Vanity takes every form; people are ruined, marry or kill themselves to make the world talk of them. Believe me real passions are those which are shut up; the true romances are those of which the public are ignorant: the true sorrows are those which are borne in silence, and for which we neither wish to be pitied nor consoled.'

'Then there is nothing true in the history of the preceptor!' said Pierre, with a naive anxiety which made Mademoiselle de Villepreux smile.

'If it had happened as is related,' returned she, 'I assure you it would not have been related. For if I had an inclination for that young man, one of two things would have happened: either he would have been worthy of me, and my grandfather would not have opposed my choice, or I should have been deceived, and my grandfather would have opened my eyes for me. In the latter case I should have had, I think, strength enough to show neither false pride nor ridiculous despair, and no one would have had the satisfaction of seeing my cheek

become pale. But, as there is always something real at the bottom of human inventions, I must tell you what there is true in this romance. My brother had, in fact, a tutor in Latin and Greek, who was not very strong, they say, in his Greek or in his Latin, but who was quite enough so since my bro her was resolved not to learn either the one or the other. I was fourteen years old at most, and from time to time, out of pity to the poor professor who was losing his time with us, I took the lesson instead of Raoul; at the end of a year I knew rather more than my master, which was not saying much.

'One fine day, I remarked that, even while eating with a very good appetite, he uttered deep sighs every time I offered him any dish. I asked him if he was suffering; he replied that he suffered horribly, and I began to question him about his health, without imagining that he had just made me a declaration. The next day I found in my grammar a singular billet, all marked with points of exclamation; I carried it to my grandfather, who laughed a great deal at it, and advised me not to let it be guessed I had received it. He had quite a long interview with the professor, and the day after the latter had disappeared. I know not what woman of the world, or what chambermaid invented a domestic scandal, the brutal and humiliating dismissal of the professor and my despair. The fact is, that my grandfather had intrusted to the young man a trifling political mission in Spain, in which he acquitted himself as well as another, and on his return he was received at the chateau with as much good will as if nothing had happened which should banish him from it. Nothing was ever said between us of the billet, and he did not write another. He even seems to have entirely forgotten it; for I have heard him laugh quite frequently at people who are presumptuous enough to take any risk with women. In other matters he is a good youth, whom I esteem greatly, though his peculiarities sometimes make me smile, and I believe that is also your feeling respecting him.'

'Do I know him?' said Pierre, stupified.

Yseult with an arch manner passed her fingers over her cheeks, as if to draw upon them the shape of Achille Lefort's great black whiskers. She did not designate him otherwise, and she afterwards placed her finger on her lips with a smile full of significance and good humour. This moment of freedom and of gaiety showed her to Pierre under an aspect of beauty which he did not know in her, and the delicate confidence she testified in him penetrated to his heart.

CHAPTER XXIX.

We have arrived, in the course of our history, at that decisive moment in which the secret societies of the bourgeoisie under the restoration gave way. If the reader has paid attention to the sketch we have traced of the Count de Villepreux, he must suspect to which of the four parties of carbonarism this old politician was attached; and he can at the same time thereby explain to himself, how a person so crafty, so sceptical, so frivolous, and so pusillanimous, had dared to leave the vulgar path of official politics to adventure in conspiracies.

Certainly, the count had too strong a feeling for the historical tradition of France, whether ancient regime, or revolution, to think of a foreign prince; and, since we must call this pretender by his name, of a prince of Orange. Monsieur de Villepreux left this idol to other conspirators. There are men of state at this day, ministers, peers, or deputies, who, then fixed by exile in Belgium, had thought of re-uniting Belgium to France by giving the constitutional sceptre to a Belgic prince; they also thought for a moment that they could overthrow the restoration by the assistance of the North. History will perhaps one day bring to light the learned memorials which they addressed to the emperor of Russia in favour of their candidate. That Dutch candidate had not the suffrage of the count, in spite of the infinite efforts made to seduce him by a certain electric professor, who, going on freebooting excursions into Germany during his vacations, thought also that he had found in Holland the future monarch of France.

The count would more willingly have been a partizan of Napoleon II. than of the Prince of Orange. A prefect under the empire, an imperial restoration might have been profitable to him. But he had too much sense not to understand that the empire without the emperor, without the great man, was a chimera.

In fine, though he liked utopias, and was, in theory, the advocate of the most rational ideas, of the most philosophical and most radical principles, he had too little enthusiasm to wish, with Lafayette, to ascend a scaffold, or to secure a republic, of which he did not clearly see the future destiny. This fraction of carbonarism was managed and caressed by him; but, in reality, he looked upon it only as a useful in-

strument, a bird-call to decoy the bold ones, an ally to excite the ardour of the thoughtless, and to get the chesnuts out of the fire. Achille Lefort sincerely thought the Count de Villepreux a *Lafayétist;* but the Count de Villepreux knew very well, at the bottom of his soul, that he was an *Orléanist*.

He was like Monsieur de Talleyrand, his friend and his protector. Like Monsieur de Talleyrand, he sought, not for a man, but for a *fact;* that is, for a man who was a *fact*. Dear reader, this is the famous banner, *parce que Bourbon*, which you saw displayed afterwards, and which perhaps astonished you then and appeared new. Know that the politicians with sharp noses had long been on that scent. The Count de Villepreux had been naturally put upon the track, in consequence of the relations of his family with one of the active parties of the revolution; relations which I have already informed you of. He had understood, at half a word, that Monsieur de Talleyrand's man was not to act himself, but to *play dead*. Only, believing the occasion more favourable than it was, and the issue more near, he had ventured, on his individual account, encouraged moreover by the example of those who, in good faith, and with more disinterestedness than he himself had,* directed this intrigue. It was thus he found himself embarked in what he now called, when he spoke in a low voice to himself, *cette maudite galère*.

'The Orleans party,' says a historian of carbonarism, 'is that which did most harm to the association, especially towards the last. At the beginning it is not impossible that Louis Philippe might have conceived some hopes from those vast preparations for insurrection; but it must soon have become evident to that prince that his cousins had still too many resources at their command to be so easily forced, and that carbonarism could have no other effect upon them but to make them anxious and drive them to reaction. He therefore allowed others to conspire for him, but decided to remain in the shade, judging that the time for his appearance had not arrived. Skilful politicians are not those who seek to make circumstances, but those who seek to prepare themselves for circumstances. At last the war in Spain came to strike the last blow at associations. The revolution, repressed for the time in Spain by the most vigorous and most impolitic act which the Bourbons had yet accomplished, fell in France at the same moment. Conquered with arms in its hands, there where it had succeeded in organizing itself openly, it could no longer retain a hope of triumphing where it possessed only the resources of secret meetings and of conspiracies.

* We refer particularly to Manuel, who is supposed to have led the Orléanist party in carbonarism.

The moral effect of a victory completed what discord had begun, and what criminal suits and scaffolds would never have produced.'

On the 3rd of November of that same year, 1823, that is to say, about two months after the adventure of the Corinthian and the marchioness, the Count de Villepreux's birth-day was celebrated. Several persons of the neighbourhood were invited to dine. Many others came to pay homage to the patriarch of the liberal party of Loir-et-Cher. The count was not greatly flattered by these domestic ovations. His resolutions were so much affected by the state of politics that, on the morning of his fete, his grandson Raoul having come to embrace him, he had quite a long conversation with him, at the end of which, after having chided him in a paternal manner upon several points, he gave him to understand that he would no longer throw any obstacles in the way of his military ardour, and that, if the war was prolonged in Spain, he would permit him to ask for service in the French army. Raoul was so much enchanted by this half-promise, that he mounted his horse and hurried to announce it to his young friends of the neighbouring chateaus, who were assembled at a hunting rendezvous about two leagues from Villepreux. There was great joy and great exclamation on their part. They drank to the health of the old count, declaring that they would forgive him the past, and that they would go and thank him for having gratified Raoul's wishes, although their families no longer visited. Towards evening Raoul prepared to return to his grandfather's dinner, when it entered into the heads of those young madcaps to invite themselves to that dinner, some with the impulse given to them by the champagne, others with the malicious thought of compromising the old count with his liberal guests by this proceeding. Raoul imagined that it was an excellent method of drawing his grandfather along more speedily, and the young ultra-royalist phalanx reached the chateau at the moment dinner was served.

The apparition of these children of noble families at the liberal banquet of the Count de Villepreux, produced a singular commotion. The guests stared at each other in a strange manner. Some of them were indignant, and wished to retire without breaking their fast; certain others, who were patronized by the relatives of the young gentlemen, did not dare to show themselves too cold towards them, and were very uncomfortable. The count rose above the position with a diplomatic ease before which the thoughtless impertinence of our beardless ultras was compelled to strike its flag. But the situation became still more complicated, when, at the end of the first course, he saw Achille Lefort arrive at the

head of a Macedonian phalanx of very savage little republicans whom he had recruited on his journey, and whom he brought there to put into communication with his other adepts, wishing to bestow the carbonic baptism upon them all under the shadow of the old count's fete. He presented them to the latter with his customary assurance, giving him to understand, by means of the expressions with double meaning of carbonarism, that they were *cousins*, and that there was no escape. The count still played his part gracefully; and while the first hunger kept political hatred slumbering at the bottom of their stomachs, he applied himself, without appearing to do so, to seek a method of getting rid both of Raoul's knights and Achille's conspirators. When he had found it he felt tranquil; but as his project could not be put in execution until after dinner, and, as before then very earnest discussions might be opened at the table, and compel him to take one side or the other, he thought of having flourishes played under the windows of the dining hall at the appearance of each course. A word in the ear of his old roué of a valet de chambre was enough to produce, five minutes after, a horrible uproar of hunting horns, to which all the dogs of the chateau and village replied by plaintive howlings, and which cut short the speech of the most excited. At first the company was rather mortified by this cruel serenade, and Achille Lefort, who was in a vain of eloquence, declared to his neighbours that it was odious and insupportable. But Raoul, who cordially detested his ex-tutor since he had assumed grand airs with him, was delighted to see that he could not edge in a word, and encouraged the horn-blowers by sending wine to them. The horns having lost their effect, for the lungs of liberalism at last became accustomed to and struggled with the flourishes, it was found that Raoul's horse had got unfastened and was fighting in the stable with the horses of his young friends. All rose and ran to separate the combatants, which was a long and difficult enterprise: Wolf, notified by the valet-de-chambre, had wonderfully seconded his master's intentions. When they returned the dessert was on the table: this was the most dangerous moment. But the wine circulated abundantly, and the provincials, who like to drink, forgot their resentments, and allowed Achille and his Romans to occupy the arena of discussion. Fortunately the count had a powerful auxiliary in the person of Josephine Clicot. The marchioness had that day made a ravishing toilette, and her beauty was such as to turn the heads of all parties. The count placed her in relief by requesting her to sing some songs of the province according to the old country usage, and in the manner of the *pastourelles* of the Lande. Josephine, brought up in the fields, having a pretty voice and

a special talent for mimicry, sang those simple ballads in a very piquant manner and with a great deal of effect. She made them beg a long while, but at last she yielded. From that moment nothing else was thought of but the seductive marchioness. The young royalists, who had been intentionally placed around her, disputed among themselves for her replies, her glances, her smiles, and even for the fruits and bon-bons which her hand had touched. When they passed into the saloon, they there found a violin. Raoul knew how to play contredances. The count desired his daughter to place herself at the piano, and in a moment the ball was organized. They had gone to get, in order to increase the number (for there were but few women), the daughter of the adjunct, and those of the farmers who had quite fine toilettes for village ladies. During this time, Achille, indignant at the count's frivolity, had disappeared with *his men*, and had sent for Pierre Huguenin.

In the morning, Pierre had received, by an express, a billet from the travelling clerk, in which, while announcing his arrival, he requested him to give notice, to and assemble the members of, his future vente, and indicated the rendezvous for that evening, during the amusements of the fête, in the workshop of the chateau. Pierre had made his preparations with a certain discouragement. The nearer he saw approach the moment of binding himself by serious engagements to a work which had at first appeared to him vain and frivolous, the more he felt his repugnances revive. He was even the victim of a kind of remorse, which the simple illusions maintained in his mind by Mademoiselle de Villepreux could no longer smother. At last the hour had come, and Pierre promised himself that he would refuse his adhesion if the form of the oath and the exposition of the programme implicated the least treachery to his principles and his feelings.

But it was written that he should escape this danger. At the moment when Achille, accompanied by his proselytes, marched in the darkness of the night towards the workshop which was to serve him as a temple, the Count de Villepreux presented himself, and, pretending to be ignorant of his projects, told him that a writ of arrest had been issued against him, that the gendarmes were looking for him, and that he had not a moment to lose if he wished to escape pursuit. His plans had been discovered: the prefect had written to the king's attorney: they were resolved to punish all acts of propagandism. Happily an employè at the prefecture, to whom the count had formerly rendered some services, had had the generosity to give him warming, in order that, if he himself ran any chance of being compromised, he could secrete himself. He certainly would have to undergo a domiciliary visit;

that night. In fine the interest of the cause required that the assembly should disperse, and that Achille should leave the country that very moment. A good horse and a faithful domestic were all ready, the one to carry him, the other to guide him across the landes as far as the border of the department. All this story was so well related, and the old count played his comedy so well, that the terrified republicans dispersed on the instant like a handful of dried leaves swept away by the wind. Achille, who only asked for emotions, had that of believing himself at last persecuted; and this nocturnal flight, these dangers which did not exist, this mystery which he could have wished to confide to all the world, occupied him and gave him a childish joy. He ran towards the workshop to inform Pierre of his flight and to bid him farewell.

Pierre was waiting for him, and was not alone. Yseult, who was in the confidence, and whom her father had authorized to second the establishment of *la Jean Jacques Rousseau* (even while he himself laboured underhandedly to secure its failure), had secretly escaped from the saloon in order to assist the artisan in his preparations. She had opened her cabinet of the turret, in order that he might take from there tables, chairs, and torches; and she was pointing out to him the material arrangement of the ceremony, when Achille came to give the appointed signal at the shutter of the workshop. He rapidly confided to them his tragical situation, swore to them that he would not abandon the cause, that he would be able by himself alone, to resuscitate carbonarism throughout the whole of France under another form, and that they should soon see him again at Villepreux, in spite of tyrants and sub-prefects. Then he embraced Pierre, and exhorted him so warmly to remain faithful to liberalism, that Pierre was edified by his perseverance and the little fear he testified. The fact was that Achille did not know fear, self-love and generosity always directing him to the advanced posts of mad enterprises. Yseult gave him a shake of the hand, and conducted him with Pierre, by a small covered way, as far as the grating of the park, where his guide and the horses were waiting for him. Then they returned to re-arrange the workshop, and to remove every trace of the shipwreck of *la Jean Jacques Rousseau.*

On carrying the furniture back to the study in the turret, Pierre could not avoid feeling a painful emotion, which Yseult perceived and shared.

'This apartment [recalls a painful recollection to you, as well as to me,' said she to him with candour. 'I would wish to efface it. Do you not remember a certain engraving which you accepted and afterwards despised. It is still there; and

so long as it remains I shall think that we are not entirely reconciled.'

'Give it to me very quickly,' replied Pierre. 'I have long reproached myself for not daring to claim it again.'

'Here it is,' said Yseult; 'and at the same time here is a child's toy which you were to have been compelled to accept this evening from another hand than mine, and which you will receive from me as a memorial of friendship and of political union.'

'What's is this, then?' said Pierre, examining a superb poignard, admirably engraved, which she presented to him; 'of what use can it be to me? It is not a joiner's tool, I presume.'

'It is a weapon of civil war,' replied she; 'and it is the pledge which is conferred on the carbonaro initiate.'

'I have indeed been told that they swore on this ominous symbol. I did not believe it.'

'Royalism has made emphatic phrases thereupon; but carbonarism has clearly proved that the poignard was in its hands only a sign of inoffensive rallying. Its introduction into our mysteries is respectable, inasmuch as it comes to us from Italian carbonarism, which counts more serious battles and more numerous martyrs than our own. It is the symbol of our fraternity with those victims, of whom each of us ought every day to make a religious commemoration in his heart, as the catholics do of their saints in their prayers; and since we can no longer weep for them except in secret, it is perhaps good to have constantly before our eyes this emblem, which reminds us of their violent death and their sublime fanaticism.'

'Do you know,' said Pierre, turning the poignard in his hand and examining it with a kind of sadness, 'that there is a superstition among us respecting such things? The gift of an instrument with a sharp blade *cuts friendship*, according to some, and brings misfortune, according to others, to him who has received or to him who has given it.'

'I have no faith in that, thought it is a poetical idea.'

'Nor I either, and yet— But what cipher is this engraved in open-work on the blade?'

'It is yours now. Formerly it was that of one of my ancestors, to whom this poignard belonged. His name was Pierre de Villepreux; is it not thus that you call yourself also when you unite your baptismal name to your name as a companion?'

'It is true,' said Pierre, smiling; 'but with this difference, that your ancestors gave their name to the village, while the village has yielded it to me.'

'Your ancestors were serfs and mine were soldiers; that is to say, you descend from the oppressed, and I from the oppressors. I greatly envy your nobility, master Pierre.'

'This poignard is too handsome for me,' said he, replacing it on the table; 'I should be asked, in jest, where I had stolen it; and since, really, I am of the people, I wear the yoke of superstition. I cannot help having a gloomy feeling before that sharp weapon. Decidedly, I do not wish it. Give me something else.'

'Choose,' said Yseult, opening all her cases to him.

'My choice will be quickly made,' said Pierre. 'There is, in a volume of your Bossuet, a little cross of cut paper, with Greek ornaments of the Lower Empire, which are in fine taste.'

'Eh! *mon Dieu!* are you a magician then? How do you know that? I do not know it myself. It is two years since I have opened my Bossuet.'

Pierre took down the volume, opened it, and showed her the little cross, which he had greatly desired formerly, and which he had respected.

'How do you know it was I that made it?' said she.

'Your cipher is cut in Gothic letters on one of the ornaments.'

'That is the truth. Well, take it, then. But what will you do with it?'

'I will hide it, and I shall look at it in secret.'

'Is that all?'

'That is quite enough.'

'You attach to it some philosophical idea; you prefer this emblem of mercy to the emblem of vengeance which I had intended for you.'

'That is possible: but I prefer, above all, this piece of paper cut by you under the influence of a calm and religious idea, to that rich poignard, which has perhaps served as an instrument of hatred.'

'Now, will you tell me, master Pierre, how you are so well acquainted with my cabinet and my books, and even with the little marks that are in them? Unless you have the gift of second sight, everything leads me to believe that you have read here.'

'I have read all that is here,' replied Pierre; and he made his confession, without omitting the extreme care he had taken not to injure anything in the cabinet, and not even to tarnish the margins of the books. These scruples made Yseult smile. She put several questions to him respecting the effect which those readings had produced upon him, asked him in what order he had made them, and what impressions he had received from them. On hearing his replies, she explained to

herself many things which she had not before understood in him, and was struck by the correctness of judgment with which, without other light than that of a rigid conscience, and a heart full of charity, he refuted the error and confounded the pride of the wise men of this world, admiring in the poets and the philosophers only that which is truly great and eternally beautiful, believing in history only that which is in accordance with divine logic and human dignity, elevating himself, in fine, by his innate greatness, above all the greatnesses determined by the judgment of men. She was completely subjugated, affected, seized with respect, filled with faith, and at the same time, with a kind of shame, as is the case when we discover that we have ingenuously protected a being superior to all protection. Seated upon the edge of a table, her eyes cast down, her soul penetrated with that feeling which Christians have defined *compunction*, she kept silence for a long while after he had spoken.

'I have wearied you, annoyed you, perhaps,' said Pierre, intimidated by this apparent coldness; 'you have allowed me to talk, and I have forgotten myself—I must seem to you more presumptuous in my ideas than good M. Lefort—'

'Pierre,' replied Yseult, 'I have been asking myself, for the last fifteen minutes, if I am worthy of your friendship.'

'Are you laughing at me?' said Pierre, with simplicity. 'No, that cannot be the idea which engrosses you, it is impossible.'

Yseult rose. She was paler then she had ever been; her eyes shone with a mystic fire. The reflection of the lamp with a green shade, which lighted the turret, spread over her face a vague and floating tone which gave her the appearance of a spectre. She seemed to move and to speak in a fever, and yet her attitude was calm and her voice firm. Pierre remembered the sybil he had seen in his dream, and he felt a kind of terror.

'The idea which engrosses me?' said she to him, looking at him with a fixedness which announced an unshakable will; 'if I were to tell it to you now, you would not believe it. But I will tell you some day, and then you will believe it. In the meanwhile, pray to God for me; for there is something great in my destiny, and I am only a poor girl to accomplish it.'

She hastened to arrange her cabinet with great precision, though she had the appearance of being wrapt by thought in another world. Then she went out, and crossed the workshop without saying a word to Pierre, who followed her carrying her candlestick. When she was upon the threshold of the door which opened upon the park, she repeated to him again, 'Pray for me;' and, taking her candle, she extinguished it,

and disappeared before him like a phantom which is dissipated. What had she intended to say? Pierre did not dare to seek for the meaning of her words. 'Yes,' said he to himself, 'now she is as in my dream, speaking by enigmas, and showing me in the future something which I do not understand.' He felt himself seized with dizziness, and pressed his forehead in his hands, as if he feared it would burst.

Unable to resist the agitation which was in him, attracted as by a loadstone, he glided along in the footsteps of Mademoiselle de Villepreux, in order still longer to see her float before him like a pale spectre, or at least to breathe the air through which she passed. He thus reached as far as the open lawn which extended before the front of the chateau; and stopping among the last clumps of trees, he saw her re-enter the saloon. The weather being magnificent, and the dance very animated, the windows had been thrown open, and, from his position, Pierre could see the waltz pass and the marchioness whirl, surrounded by admirers, among whom were young persons of good family, whose gallant manners were mingled with that slight dose of impertinence which pleases silly women. Josephine was intoxicated with her success; it was a long while since she had an opportunity of being a belle and of seeing herself thus admired. She was like a moth which turns and flutters around the light. Yseult, in order to relieve the persons who had played by turns on the violin, resumed her seat at the piano. Pierre placed himself so that he could see her. Her eyes swam in a kind of fluid, and other images than those of reality seemed to be delineated before her. She played with a great deal of nerve and action, but her hands ran over the keys without her being conscious of it.

Raoul came out to take the air with one of his friends. Pierre heard him say: 'Only look at my sister; would not one say she was an automaton?'

'Does she never smile more than that? returned his companion.

'Not much more.' She is a girl of sense, but a head of iron.'

'Do you know that she frightens me with her fixed eyes. She has the air of a marble statue which should undertake to play sarabands.'

'I think she has the air of the Goddess of Reason,' replied Raoul in a mocking tone, 'and that she plays contredances on the movement of the Marseillaise.'

These young men passed on, and almost immediately Pierre saw some one who was wandering in silence around the lawn, and whose irregular walk betrayed his inward agitation. When this man came near him, he recognised the Corinthian,

and, issuing gently from his retreat, he seized him by the arm. 'What are you doing here?' said he to him, for he well understood his secret pain; 'do you not know that this is not your place, and that, if you wish to see, you must not be seen? Come, let us go, Amaury, you are suffering, and you can do nothing here to change your lot.'

'Well!' said the Corinthian, 'let me be filled with my suffering. Let me dry up my heart by the strength of my hatred and my contempt.'

'By what right would you despise her whom you have adored? was Josephine less coquettish, less frivolous, less easy to be led away the day when you began to love her?'

'She did not belong to me then! But now that she is mine, she must be mine alone, or she must no longer be anything to me. My God! how impatiently do I await the hour to tell her so!—But this ball will never finish! She will dance all night, and with all those men. What a horrible abandonment of herself! That waltz is the most immodest thing in the world that I know of among those people. Only see, Pierre,—look at her! Her arms are bare, her shoulders are bare, her bosom is almost bare! Her dress is so short that half her legs can be seen, and so transparent that all her form can be distinguished. A woman of the people would blush to show herself thus in public; she would fear to be mistaken for a prostitute! And now, there she passes, all palpitating, from the arms of one man into the arms of another man, who presses her, who raises her, who inhales her breath, who clasps again her already dishonoured waist, and who drinks in voluptuousness from her eyes. No! I can't look at this any longer. Let us go, Pierre—or rather, let us burst into that ball-room, break those chandeliers, overturn all the furniture, put to flight all the dandies, and their women will see if they can defend them against the *insults of the populace*.'

Pierre saw that the exasperation of his friend could no longer be restrained. He drew him away from the chateau, and succeeded in persuading him to return home. There they found a letter, post-marked from Blois, the sight of which made the Corinthian shudder. It was addressed to Pierre, who immediately communicated the contents to him.

'My dear pays' (wrote the dignitary), 'I announce to you that the society of the devoir of liberty leaves this residence, and that Blois ceases to be one of the cities of our devoir. The persecutions which we have had to suffer from the other societies have so disgusted us, that we prefer the abandonment of our rights to an interminable war. This resolution having been taken by common agreement, we are on the eve of dispersion.' Here the dignitary entered into details relative to

the society, and related the various motives for their resolution. Then he referred to his own individual affairs, and informed his ex-colleague that the Savinienne, compelled to give up keeping her inn, which was frequented only by the gavots, whose mother she was, had determined to leave her business, and to sell her house. 'I should have thought, my dear pays,' said he, 'that I would have been consulted upon this matter. As a friend of the late Savinien, and as one devoted to the interests of his widow more than to my own, I flattered myself that I could be her adviser and guide under such circumstances. Well, she has acted otherwise. She has offered her establishment for sale under my name, declaring before the law that it was not the property of her children, but mine, because I had furnished the funds, and had not been re-imbursed. And when I reproached her for this, she replied to me that it was her duty to act thus and that she was not willing to deceive me any longer, her intention being not to marry again. Villepreux, she has told me that you knew her reasons, and that she had confided to you all that passed between her husband and myself at the time of his death. I do not ask you any questions, my dear pays; I know quite enough. When one has the misfortune not to be loved, he ought to know how to suffer, and not descend to complaints. If I write to you, it is for another reason. I see clearly the mother intends leaving Blois, and I think she means to establish herself near you. But I believe she is without resources, though she assures me she has made some savings. She makes it a point of honour not to remain indebted to a man whom she refuses to take as a husband. But this is a mistaken pride, and one which she has no right to testify towards me. I have done nothing to be thus despised and treated like a creditor. I shall know how to be resigned under this affront; apparently I have committed some fault, for which God is pleased to punish me by sending me a great deal of sorrow. But I will never submit to see this woman, whom her husband confided to my care, fall into poverty with her children. I know, pays Villepreaux, that you are not rich; otherwise I should feel no anxiety. I know also that a person upon whom she doubtless depends has nothing but his labour and his talents, and that these are not enough to maintain a family. I therefore earnestly beseech you to inform yourself of the situation of the mother, and to render her all the services she may require. You can dispose of all I have, provided she does not know it; for the idea of making her suffer, and humiliating her by my attachment, makes me suffer and humiliates me also. Adieu, my dear pays. You must not feel displeased at my speaking to you succinctly of all these things, and you must understand that it is not an easy matter for me. With time, I shall be more

reasonable, if it please God. I have now only to embrace you —Your friend, and sincere pays, ROMANET LE BON-SOUTIEN, D.: G.: T.: of Blois.'

The simplicity of this relation, united to the idea which Pierre formed, with reason, of Bon-soutien's deep affection, impressed him so much, that he felt his tears flow.

'Amaury! Amaury!' cried he, 'how small we are, both of us, before such a strength of mind and a generosity of such little display! *With time I shall be more reasonable, if it please God!* He thinks he wants courage at the moment when he shows a sublime courage! Men of little faith that we are, we could not suffer with such heroism. We should expend ourselves in lamentations, in murmurs; we should feel anger, hatred, have ideas of vengeance—'

'Be silent, Pierre, I understand you without you saying more,' cried the Corinthian, raising his head which he had kept hidden in his hands during the reading of the letter. 'It is for me that you say all this; for you, you are as virtuous as Romanet, and you would be as calm as he in misfortune. But if it be to re-attach me to the marchioness that you praise the forgiveness of injuries, you will not succeed in any way; the news which this letter contains overturns all my projects and renews all my former ideas. What could have been passing in the mind of the Savinienne? What does she mean to do? Upon what does she depend? I wish to know all this. You must have received a letter from her, and you have not shown it to me I wish to see it.'

'You will not see it.' replied Pierre. 'No, no! the lover of the marchioness des Frenays will not read the noble complaints of the Savinienne. Let it be enough for you to know the effect of your silence and of mine; for I have not written to her either I could not deceive her, and I did not wish to enlighten her. It always seemed to me that all was not lost, and I deferred from day to day, hoping that you would return to her.'

'In fine, what effect did your silence produce? Tell me.'

'She has guessed the truth; and, saying to herself that she was no longer loved, that perhaps she had never been loved, seeing herself forsaken, abandoned to poverty, she wished, at least to give peace to her conscience, and to accept nothing more from the dignitary. I will quote to you a single passage from her letter:

'"I have suffered long enough with Savinien from having a desire in my heart. I do not wish to suffer a life long regret, with Romanet; this would be quite as culpable. I am not without remorse for the past: I do not wish to feel it in the future. I prefer every other kind of unhappiness to this one."'

'Poor holy woman!' said the Corinthian, in a sombre voice and rising. 'Finish; what did she wish to do after having broken with Bon-soutien?'

'Resume her former business as a laundress, and, if you were not here, come and attempt an establishment. She imagined, on the one hand, that she could find work in this country; and, on the other, that you could not have remained with me, since you had forgotten her without any one's thinking to give her notice.'

'Her idea is a good one,' replied the Corinthian with an absent air; 'there is no laundress here: she will have the custom of the chateau—she will iron the transparent neckerchiefs of the marchioness,' added he with a deep bitterness. 'Pierre, give me a pen and paper, quick.'

'What do you mean to do?'

'Do you ask me?—write to the Savinienne, tell her that we expect her, that one of us will go and meet her half-way while the other will hire and prepare lodgings for her in the village. Is not that my duty?'

'Without doubt, Amaury; but spite is a poor pledge for the performance of duty. I should much prefer you would write that letter to-morrow, when your head is cooler.'

'I wish to write at once.'

'Because you feel that you will not have strength enough to-morrow.'

'I shall have; I will write again to morrow, and the day after too, if you wish; I have more strength than you think.'

'Amaury, if you write, the Savinienne will come. She will believe in you, and I, I do not know if I shall have courage to doubt you enough to undeceive her. If she comes and she finds you at the feet of the marchioness, in what light must your conduct be considered.'

'As that of a dastard or a madman.'

'Take care that you do not become mad. Do not write yet.'

The Corinthian wrote nevertheless; he wrote in the night under the dominion of profound indignation and disgust towards the marchioness. As soon as the day appeared, he ran to carry his letter to the post, and it had gone before Pierre, overpowered by fatigue, awoke.

CHAPTER XXX.

For several days the Corinthian did not again see the marchioness; and, as she had no consciousness of having committed any wrong with regard to him, coquetry being in her a second nature, her surprise was extreme; but her sorrow was not very deep at first. Her intoxication was further prolonged by a hunting party which Raoul's friends proposed, and which they arranged for her. Yseult at first tried to dissuade her from it, not liking to see her enter into relations with persons whom she believed repugnant to her grandfather, and towards whom she did not feel drawn by any tie of ideas or of position. But the old count was not displeased to see his family reconnected by some extremity with the nobility of the country, and he authorized his niece to amuse herself by accepting the invitation which an elegant and proud countess of the neighbourhood, sister to one of Josephine's most ardent admirers, came to make to her in person. This diplomatic visit had for its object, in the thought of the noble dame, the marriage of that brother, the viscount Amedee, with the rich Yseult de Villepreux. Yseult was somewhat astonished at this return towards her after the indignation which her well known republican ideas had excited in her neighbour. She replied to it quite coldly; and yet, as Josephine besought her to accompany her, she did not openly refuse. Josephine did not ride on horseback: they were to come for her in a calash. Yseult was a very good amazon; she guided her horse skilfully, and made him leap ditches and gates with that calmness from which she was never seen to depart. This talent of riding was the only one which drew to her a little consideration from her brother and the noble youths of the neighbourhood. She delighted in this exercise; and as it was very difficult for her not to have, under her grave exterior, a few of the tastes and attractions of childhood, she allowed herself to be conquered by degrees. It was some time since she had mounted on horseback; she wished to exercise alone in the park. Pierre, who watched for her incessantly, found himself upon her path, as she cleft the air with the rapidity of an arrow. She stopped short before him, and asked him laughingly if he was not scandalized at seeing her give herself up to so aristocratic an amusement. Pierre smiled in his turn, but with so much effort, and his look betrayed so deep a sadness, that Yseult divined all that was

passing within him. She wished to be sure of it: 'you know that there is to be a great hunting party to-morrow?' said she to him.

'I have heard so,' replied Pierre.

'And do you know that they wish to carry me to it?'

'I have not believed you would go.'

In making this answer, Pierre apparently allowed the depths of his soul to be read; for mademoiselle de Villepreux, after a moment's silence, during which she looked at him attentively, said to him with an ineffable gentleness and profound emotion: 'I thank you, Pierre, for not having doubted Then she resumed her impetuous course, made the circuit of the park two or three times, and returned to the front of the chateau, where her brother was waiting for her with the count and Josephine. Pierre was mending a little rustic bench at three paces distance.

'Here, take your horse,' said Yseult to Raoul, as she leaped lightly to the turf. 'I don't like him the least in the world.

'That did not seem to be the case just now, by any means, said the count; 'I thought you were on your way to the Great Desert.'

'Since you are going in, master Pierre, said Yseult to the joiner, who was retiring, 'would you have the goodnes to say to Julia, in passing, that she need not do any thing more to my habit? I shall not go to morrow,' added she, turning to Josephine, but in a tone too clear for Pierre, as he withdrew, not to hear it.

She kept her word, and her cousin's prayers found her inexorable. The count would have desired her to shew herself less obstinate, and that she would not counteract his plans of reconciliation with the neighbouring nobility. But he had testified before her so much repugnance and philosophical disdain for those people that it was quite impossible for him to retract clearly.

Pierre swam in an ocean of happiness. He could not deceive himself as to the love which he inspired; but love was so constituted that he could not express his gratitude. Nothing authorized him to give form to his thoughts, and besides, he did not feel any need of this. Never was there a passion more absolute, more devoted, more enthusiastic, on both sides; and yet never was there a love more restrained, more mute, more timid. It was as if a tacit contract had passed between them. Any one who could have heard the three or four words which Pierre exchanged in secret every day with Yseult, would have thought they were the result of an intimacy consecrated by indissoluble bonds and formal promises. No one would have been willing to believe that the word love had never been pronounced between them, and

that the virgin purity of their senses had not been touched by the slightest breath.

Josephine followed the hunt in the brilliant calash of the countess. But when the latter saw that, of her dream of alliance and fortune, there remained to her only Josephine Clicot upon her hands, and her brother who caracoled beside the door devouring the piquant provincial with his eyes, she felt that she was playing a singular part, and got vexed with everybody. The countess was dry and nervous: compelled to carry the marchioness to her chateau, to do the honours of it, and to present her to other illustrious ladies whom she had invited to flatter and caress the heiress of Villepreux, she so poorly concealed her ennui and her disdain that the poor Josephine felt herselt dying with shame and fear. Still the homage she received from the men, for youth and beauty always find grace and protection from the bearded portion of mankind, restored some assurance to her; and by degrees gathering about her by her gracefulness rich and poor, youth and age, she avenged herself without mercy for the contempt of their women. A little ball had been prepared for the evening on the supposition that Yseult, seated at the piano, would be its queen in a certain manner: the lady of the house wished to send away the violins and shorten the evening by declaring herself ill. But the faction of the men carried the day. The young brother rebelled, and his companions swore that the pretty women should not go. They made all the coachmen drunk, they took the wheels from the carriages; only the equipages of the dowagers were respected; and even their old husbands had to be scolded a great deal before they could tear themselves from the contemplation of Josephine's beautiful shoulders.

She remained, therefore, in the saloon, with five or six young wives of the smaller country gentlemen, who amused themselves on their own account, and did not think of humiliating her. But in proportion as the night advanced, the men, in passing from the contredance to the sideboard, became excited like persons who have passed all day in hunting, and assumed such rude manners that Josephine began to be frightened. There was around her a struggle between brutal desire and a remnant of propriety, of which the bounds were but poorly kept. Josephine was only foolish on the surface. She was like one of those provincial coquettes who, with a love of modesty and virtue, permit themselves to continue a system of encouragements which they consider without consequence and without danger. At first happy and proud of exciting desires, she felt her blushes mount to her brow when she had to defend herself against a commencement of familiarity; it was then that she thought of retiring. But

the countess, who had promised to carry her back, seeing the ball prolonged and Josephine pleased with it, had gone to bed, or had pretended to do so: at least she was shut up in her apartments. Raoul had allowed himself to become intoxicated, and while replying to his cousin that he was at her service, did nothing but sing and shout with laughter, without comprehending her situation. The other ladies departed one by one without offering to carry her home The viscount Amédée had made them believe that his sister intended to rise at daybreak and accompany Madame des Frenays in her carriage. Still the countess did not rise. The wearied domestics snored in the ante-chamber; Raoul, completely drunk, had fallen upon a sofa. Josephine remained as if alone, with five or six young men more or less intoxicated, each of whom would have wished to drive away the others, and who persisted in making her waltz in spite of herself. Overpowered by fatigue, deeply wounded by the conduct of her hostess, frightened by the manners of her admirers, disgusted by their stupid babble, Josephine seated herself dismayed in the midst of them. The cold of the morning made her shiver; she asked for her shawl: she was answered by loathsome, half obscene praises of the beauty of her figure. The saloon was dusty, gloomy, frightful to look at in its disorder by the bluish light of the dawn. The poor woman was cruelly punished, and every word, every look which fell upon her made her expiate her triumph. It was then that a cry of distress rose from the bottom of her soul towards the Corinthian. But he was not there, he was weeping in the depths of the park of Villepreux.

At last Josephine made an effort, feeling indeed that she had no right to be angry, after having in some manner led on all these men, but resolved to appear to them foolish and ridiculous in order to escape from their importunities. She rose, and declared that she would go on foot if a carriage was not brought for her. She spoke so drily, and repelled so well their impertinent beseechings, that she succeeded in starting, in a calash, with Raoul, who could hardly drag himself to it, and the viscount Amédée whom she was absolutely compelled to accept as her cavalier, in order to get rid of the others. Hardly did the rolling of the carriage begin to be felt, than Raoul, awakened for an instant, fell again into a lethargic sleep. For two mortal hours Josephine was obliged to defend herself, by words and actions, against the most impertinent of viscounts. This ride, which recalled to her another cariage-ride, a poetical dawn, an ardent love and partaken emotions, pained her so much that, hiding her face in her veil, she burst into tears. The viscount became only the more enterprising. Josephine was weak and inconsistent. In spite of

herself, a kind of instinctive respect for titled persons prevented her being as decided as she would have dared to be towards a citizen who had displeased her. She wished to defend herself, and she did it so awkwardly, that each of her naive answers was taken by the viscount as an encouragement. Fortunately Raoul felt cold, and woke in quite bad humour, and, not being able to go to sleep again, found the viscount insipid, and had no objection to telling him so. By degrees the feeling of the protection which he owed to his cousin, and which he had abjured in so dastardly a manner, returned to his memory by degrees also, the viscount, seeing that the hour had passed, and that the opportunity was lost, restrainnd himself and became quiet. They were all three very stupid when they reached the chateau, and Josephine, broken by vexation and fatigue, went to shut herself up in her chamber and throw herself upon her bed, where she fell asleep without having had strength enough to undress.

For many nights the Corinthian had not slept, and by day he worked without energy. He experienced rather the desire of stupifying himself, and of escaping from his own thoughts, than a real repentance of his wandering, and he awaited the Savinienne's reply with more terror than impatience; for he made useless efforts to re attach himself to that austere love, so different from that he had known with the marchioness. Pierre saw that he hoped for a refusal, and he himself desired that this might be the case. As he became confirmed in the opinion that his friend would never return completely to his first love, he promised himself that, in case the Savinienne should have faith in the Corinthian's letter, he would undeceive her, either by writing to her, or by going to meet her in order to enlighten her and exhort her to have courage.

The Corinthian was very culpable, but he loved Josephine passionately. And how should he not have loved her? His greatest crime towards her was not knowing how to make allowance for the coquetry of a badly educated young girl, and wishing to tear from his bosom, before the time, a passion of which the intoxications were not yet exhausted. We carry into love a necessity of domination which renders us implacable towards the most trifling faults. Those of the marchioness were only the fatal result of her character and habits. It was necessary that she should expiate them as she had just done in order to feel their gravity. Uneasy at first at seeing the evenings pass without receiving a visit from her lover, she had thought him ill; and stealing, one morning, along the secret passage, she went to look through the cracks in the wainscotting. She had seen him at work, at that moment, with a kind of feverish energy and a forced gaiety which she had taken for a brutal indifference. Making then

a return upon herself, comparing the homage of which she had been the object from the exquisites of the ball with this gross forgetfulness, she had been ashamed of her love, and, reanimated by the expectation of new triumphs, she had flattered herself she could abjure quickly, and efface even the remembrance of her fault. But she had made bitter reflections in the carriage which brought her from the last ball, and the sleep which now overpowered her was troubled by painful dreams.

The Corinthian had seen her depart the day before, carried away in the whirl of worldly vanity. He then said to himself that she was lost to him, and anger had given way to despair. Before that day he had flattered himself that she would not endure his desertion, and that she would soon recal him. Thinking entirely of vengeance, he had fortified himself with the idea of what she would suffer away from him. But when he saw her pass, forgetful and radiant with pleasure, he wished to throw himself under the wheels of the carriage. 'Take care, stupid !' cried the viscount Amédée, hardly taking pains to restrain his horse ready to crush him. Amaury could have wished to rush upon the fop, to overthrow him, and tread him under foot; but his proud courser had carried him away like the wind, the mechanic was covered with dust, and Josephine had seen nothing.

The Corinthian returned to the park, tore his breast with his nails, plucked up by the roots the beautiful hair which Josephine had combed and perfumed so many times; and, when he had breathed forth his rage, he began to weep. Rising before daylight, he ran to the workshop, violently tore out the nails with which he had fastened the panel in the wainscoting when he swore never again to open that passage, and rushing impetuously into it at the risk of betraying himself, he ran to Josephine's chamber to see if she had returned. He found the chamber in good order, the bed as made the day before, and ornamented with a lace counterpane which, in his madness, he tore to pieces. Then he went back to the park and waited at the gate for the return of his faithless mistress. At last he saw her arrive with the viscount, and as he did not see Raoul, who was buried in a corner of the carriage and wrapped up in his cloak, he thought of his first adventure with Josephine, and did not doubt that the viscount had triumphed over her weakness with as little opposition. When he returned to the chateau, an hour afterwards, he met Julia, the ex-turkey feeder, who was at least as coquettish as her mistress, and who always made her great black eyes sparkle for him. He found no difficulty in making her talk; and when he learnt that the marchioness had shut herself up in her chamber, and refused with ill-humour the services of

her maid to undress her, he asked if the viscount had not remained at the chateau. He had waited in vain in the park to see him pass on his way back, and still flattered himself that he had taken another road. 'Oh ! bah !' replied Julia, 'M. the viscount will not go quite so soon. He has asked for a chamber to take some rest in, for it appears they have danced all night: but I am very sure that they will dance again to-night, and that all those handsome gentlemen will come back here to dine. They are all in love with my mistress, and I verily believe the viscount is crazy about her.'

Amaury quickly turned his back, and left Julia to finish her comments alone. He ran to the workship, and, unable to enter the secret passage, because father Huguenin, Pierre, and the other workmen were there, he began to work upon his sculpture. Father Huguenin was in quite a bad humour. He found that the job did not go on so well as at the beginning. Pierre was always quite as conscientious; but he had lost more than a month on Mademoiselle de Villepreux's aviary, and now he was incessantly taken off. Ten times a day he was called away for all the little repairs which were to be made in the interior of the chateau; as if it was the part of a master workman like him to mend legs of chairs, and to plane warped doors, and as if William and the Berrichon were not good enough for such jobs! The Corinthian, skilfully concealing his relations with the marchioness, did indeed pass his days at the workshop; but he had strange fits of absence, profound lassitude, and often yielded to an imperious need of sleep, from which they found it very difficult to awaken him. That day, when, instead of the joiner's heavy plane, he took up the light chisel of the sculptor, father Huguenin made a grimace, and asked him several times if he should soon have done dressing his littlemen. 'I don't see,' said he, 'what there is so useful and so necessary in that work, that the walls must be left bare in the meanwhile. And, as to the pleasure you can find in manufacturing those Nuremberg dolls, I can't conceive that any better. For the last week especially, my poor Amaury, you have been making only dragons and serpents, without speaking of those you have made me swallow ! I believe the devil must have got hold of you, for you make his portrait in every style; and, if I were a woman, I should not like to look at those gentlemen: I should be afraid of having some like them.'

'The one I am making now,' replied the Corinthian, in a bitter tone, 'is a very pretty monster. It is Luxury, the president of the council of capital sins, the queen of the world—therefore I shall put a crown on her head: the patron of all women—therefore I shall give her ear-rings and a fan.'

Father Huguenin could not help laughing; and then, as

the toilette of dame Luxury did not finish, he resumed his ill-humour, scolded the Corinthian, who pretended not to hear him, and at last spoke to him in a rude tone and with inflamed eyes.

'Let me alone, master,' said the Corinthian; 'I am not in a condition to satisfy you to-day, and I feel no more patient than you do.'

Father Huguenin, accustomed to be obeyed blindly, became still more angry, and wished to snatch the chisel from his hands. Pierre, who watched them with anxiety, saw a savage fury kindle in the eyes of the Corinthian, and his hand seek a hammer which he would perhaps have raised upon the head of the old man, had not Pierre rushed before him.

'Amaury! Amaury!' cried he, 'what do you mean to do with that hammer? Think you that my heart is not sufficiently broken by your suffering?

Amaury saw the tears roll down his friend's cheeks; he rose and fled into the park. When the workmen had left the workshop for luncheon, he precipitated himself into the secret passage with his hammer, which he had not let go. He expected to find the door of the alcove barricaded; and promised himself that he would break it in. Perhaps even a more gloomy thought crossed his brain. It is certain that he expected to find the viscount with the marchioness. But, on pushing the spring, which he himself had put to the secret door, he met with no resistance. He had arranged this door so that it opened without any noise; for, during his days of happiness, he had neglected nothing to insure their mystery. He therefore entered Josephine's chamber without awakening her, and saw her lying upon her bed, half undressed, her hair in disorder, her arms still loaded with jewels, with her stained and torn ball-dress wrapped around her. At first she inspired him with a kind of disgust in that sullied toilette which the bright light of day made still more accusing. He remembered having read something of Cleopatra's orgies, and of the shameful loves of the enslaved Antony. He gazed at her a long while and ended, after cursing her a thousand times, by finding her handsomer than ever. Love chased away resentment, but it soon returned more bitter and more profound than ever. Josephine wept, accused herself humbly, confessed all the insults she had undergone, and those from which she had been able to withdraw herself. She cast her anathema upon that insolent and corrupted world in which she had wished to shine, and which had so cruelly punished her for the wish; she swore never to return to it, and to perform any penance her lover might wish to impose upon her; she wished to shave off her beautiful hair, and tear her alabaster bosom, when she saw upon the temples and the

chest of the Corinthian the marks of his fury and his despair; she threw herself upon her knees, she invoked the anger of God upon herself: she was so beautiful in her sorrow and exaltations, that the Corithian, intoxicated with love, asked her forgiveness, kissed her naked feet a thousand times, and was only roused from the delirium of passion by the voice of Yseult, who called her cousin to dinner and was anxious at her long sleep.

Amaury returned to the workshop, loyally asked pardon of father Huguenin, who embraced him, scolding and wiping his eyes with the back of his sleeve. Then he placed himself at his orders with a zeal and a submission which effaced all his misconduct. He sang in chorus with his companions, which had not been the case for a long while; he made a thousand jokes upon the Berrichon, who was vexed with him and ended by forgiving him—for he would rather be tormented than forgotten. At last the day's work closed as gaily as it had begun badly. Pierre was the only one who remained sad and uneasy. His friend's exuberant and sudden joy made him anxious.

At sunset, Yseult, to escape from the society of the viscount, who, rudely repelled by Josephine, transferred to her his homage, less ardent indeed, but quite as insipid, quietly withdrew, and went to walk alone at the extremity of the park. Perhaps she thought she might meet Pierre there: for, in whatever place she walked, she always met him. This is a miracle performed every day for beings who love each other, and there is no couple of lovers who can here accuse me of improbability. Nevertheless Pierre did not come that evening. He did not wish to lose sight of the Corinthian, whom he saw greatly agitated in spite of all his cheerfulness. He wished to sacrifice to the dignity of the Savinienne the only joy he had in this world, that of talking a quarter of an hour with Yseult.

While interrogating with her eyes the circular path by which Pierre sometimes arrived, Mademoiselle de Villepreux saw approach a woman of quite a large figure, who walked with much ease and nobleness in her rustic dress. She wore a gown of brown cotton cloth, and a mantle of blue woollen which covered her head, very much as the Florentine painters draped their figures of virgins. The regular beauty and the grave and pure expression of this woman gave her a striking resemblance to those divine heads of the school of Raphael. She led an ass, on which was seated a beautiful child with golden hair, clothed like herself in a dark, coarse dress, and whose legs hung in one of the panniers. Yseult was struck by this group which recalled to her the flight into Egypt,

and she stopped to contemplate that living picture which only wanted a glory.

On her side, the woman of the people was struck by the calm and benevolent face of the young chatelaine; from her simple and almost austere dress she took her for a serving woman, and addressed her :

'My good demoiselle,' said she to her, stopping the ass at the park-gate, 'will you have the goodness to tell me if I am still far from the village of Villepreux?'

'You are already there, my good dame,' replied Yseult, 'you have only to follow the road which leads along the wall of this park, and in ten minutes you will reach the first houses of the town.'

'Many thanks to you and to the good God !' returned the traveller ; 'for my children are much fatigued.'

At the same time Yseult saw a second child's head, not less handsome than the first, rise up from the other pannier of the ass.

'In that case,' said she, 'you can enter here. You will cross the park in a straight line and you will arrive five minutes sooner still.'

'Will they not consider it wrong?' asked the traveller.

'They will consider it quite right,' replied Mademoiselle de Villepreux, going to meet her, and taking the bridle of the ass to lead it in.

'You appear to be a girl of good heart; must I follow this alley straight along?'

'I will go with you, for the dogs might frighten your children.'

'I was told truly,' returned the traveller, 'that I should find honest people here, and the proverb is right : "As is the master, so is the servant ;" for, without intending to offend you, I presume you must belong to the household.'

'I do so indeed,' replied Yseult, laughing.

'And for a long time, doubtless?'

'Ever since I have been in the world.'

The children no sooner saw the fine trees and the green turf of the park, than they forgot their fatigue, jumped down from their ass, and began to run about joyously, while the ass, profiting by the opportunity, secretly snatched from time to time, a branch of verdure along the hedges.

'Your children are very beautiful,' said Yseult kissing the little girl, and taking the little boy in her arms to let him pluck some apples from an apple-tree.

'Poor fatherless children !' replied the woman of the people. 'I lost my good husband last spring.'

'Did he leave you a little property, at least?'

'Nothing at all, and certainly it was not his fault; it was not the heart that he wanted!'

'And have you come from a distance, thus, on foot?'

'I came in a stage-waggon as far as the neighbouring city. There I was told I must cross the country. They directed me quite well, and I hired this poor ass to carry my little ones.'

'And what is the end of your journey?'

'I stop here, my dear demoiselle, I have come to pass some time.'

'Have you relatives in our town?'

'I have friends—that is to say,' added the traveller, as if she feared not to express herself with sufficient reserve, 'friends of my deceased husband, who have written to me that I could find work, and who have promised that they would obtain custom for me.'

'What can you do?'

'Sew, wash, and iron fine linen.'

'That will do very well. There is no laundress here. You will have the work of the chateau, and that will employ you all the year.'

'You will procure it for me?'

'I promise it to you!'

'It is the great God who made me meet you. I am not self-interested: I have nothing but my labour to feed those children with.'

'All will go well, I can assure you. Do your friends expect you?'

'Mon Dieu! not so soon, I think. They wrote to me last week, and, instead of answering their letter, I have come at once. You must know, my good girl, I was a mother of companions; but perhaps you know nothing of such matters?'

'Excuse me, I know companions who have explained to me what that is. Then you have left your children?'

'It was my children who left me. They could not hold the city; and as I had not the same means to furnish another establishment, I could not follow them. It is painful, be sure, to have a great family like that, and to be afterwards quite alone. It seems to me that I have nothing to do now, and yet I have these little ones to bring up. It was so trying to go, that I hurried to get away. We all cried, and when I think about it, I cry still.'

'Come, we will endeavour to make you forget them. Here we are in the court of the chateau. To what house are you going. Will you find a lodging with your friends?'

'I think not; but certainly there is an inn at the town.'

'Not a very good one; here is a better. If you will, you

shall be lodged here until you can find a place to establish yourself.'

'In this chateau But they will not be willing to receive me!'

'You will be very well received. Come with me.'

'But, my child, you do not think; I shall be taken for a beggar.'

'No; and you will see that the people of the house are very honest.'

'If they are all like you, I believe so, indeed. Holy Virgin Mary! it is like paradise here.'

Yseult conducted the Savinienne and her family to an old pavilion which was called the Square tower, where a very neat apartment was appropriated to hospitality. She called a small boy of the farm, who came and took the ass, and a maid servant, who went to get some supper for the children and their mother. Yseult had trained all her people to this kind of charity which she practised, and which she concealed under the aspect of obligingness.

The traveller was greatly surprised at this manner of proceeding, which took from her all anxiety, and seemed to wish to dispense with all gratitude. Yseult's concise language and her straightforward and frank manners repelled every praise and every grateful expression. The woman of the people felt this, and was only the more touched by it. 'Well, well!' said she, embracing Mademoiselle de Villepreux rather strongly, but with an expression by which Yseult felt herself quite moved, in spite of the resolution she had made never to bestow on poverty the insult of pity, 'I see clearly that the good God has not yet abandoned me.

'Now,' said Yseult, overcoming her emotion, 'tell me the names of the friends you have in our village; I will have them informed of your arrival, and they will come to see you here.'

The traveller hesitated a moment, then she replied, 'You must send and tell my son Villepreux, l'Ami-du-trait, otherwise called Pierre Huguenin, that the Savinienne has arrived.'

Yseult shuddered; she looked at that woman still young, and beautiful as an angel, who had come to find Pierre and establish herself near him. She thought she had deceived herself, that what she had taken for love was only friendship, and that this was really the companion on whom he had long since fixed his choice. She felt herself fainting. But recovering her self-command on the instant, 'You will see Pierre,' said she to the Savinienne, 'and you will tell him that I have received you very heartily. He will feel obliged to me.'

She withdrew rapidly, gave the order to go and inform Pierre Huguenin, and ran to shut herself up in her chamber, where she remained for two hours, seated before her table, with her head in her hands. At the hour of tea, her grandfather sent for her. She entered the saloon as calm as if nothing serious had occupied her thoughts.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Pierre ran to visit the Savienne as soon as he learnt her arrival at the chateau. He flattered himself he should there find Amaury, who had escaped in the very middle of supper. But he did not find him there, and it was in vain that he expected him; it was in vain that he looked for him in every direction.

The evening passed without the appearance of the Corinthian. Pierre, in his previous reflections respecting the Savienne's arrival, had said to himself that her first interview with Amaury would decide their mutual destiny; and that, from the coldness or the joy of her lover, she would discover the truth or retain her illusion. His embarrassment was, therefore, very great; for the absence of the Corinthian might have an occasion independent of his will, and Pierre had no right to make his friend's confession before giving him time to justify himself. On the other side, the Savinienne was so calm, so full of faith and hope, and Pierre foresaw so clearly the inevitable disappointment which awaited her, that he reproached himself for confirming her in her error. She did not question him, a secret modesty forbidding her to pronounce first the name of him whom she loved; but she expected him to speak to her of his friend in some other manner than to repeat every moment, 'I do not see the Corinthian coming,' or 'I hope the Corinthian will come.'

Her attention was diverted for a moment, when, after having spoken, several times, of the obligingness of the *chambermaid*, whose generous reception she had at once related to Pierre, she made him guess, from the description she gave of her, that this chambermaid was no other than the young chatelaine. Then she questioned him a great deal respecting that rich and noble young lady who stopped travellers on the highway to give them hospitality for the night, and to busy herself about their anxieties for the morrow; and who did these things with such simplicity of heart that one could neither guess her rank, nor understand, at first, how good she

was, unless good one's self. From the details which Pierre gave her respecting Mademoiselle de Villepreux, the Savinienne conceived for that young person a kind of religious veneration; and her joy was great on learning the judgment she had passed upon the sculptures of the Corinthian as well as the protection she had secured for him on the part of her grandfather. But when, from questions to questions, she learned the Corinthian's projects, and his desire to go to Paris and change his trade, she became pensive and stupified; and, after having listened to all that Pierre tried to make her comprehend, she replied to him, shaking her head:—'All this astonishes me greatly, Master Pierre, and appears to me so little natural, that I think I am hearing one of those stories which our companions sometimes read in books during the evenings, and which they call romances. You say that Amaury wishes to become an artist. Is he not one while remaining a joiner? I should rather think he wishes to become a citizen and to leave his class. I do not approve of that - I have never seen the pretence of elevating one's self above one's fellows succeed well with anybody. Those who do so lose the esteem of their former companions, and become very unhappy because they have no friends. What does he intend to do at Paris? Has he the means of establishing himself there? You say that he will require many years still to become skilful in his new trade, and many more years before that trade will give him enough to live upon. Then he will live upon the charities of this lord in the meanwhile? I am willing to grant that this Count de Villepreux may be a fine man; but it is always hard to accept the succour of the rich, and I do not understand how, when he has reached a point where he can maintain himself, he is willing to place himself again under the tutorage of masters, or at the disposition of benevolent persons.'

All that Pierre could say to assert the right of intellect to all the means of advancement did not convince the Savinienne. Her good sense and her natural uprightness never failed her in reference to matters which she could comprehend; but her ideas were confined to a certain circle, and by the side of her great qualities, there was a certain number of prepossessions and prejudices by which she held to the people as the tree to its root.

Her secret dissatisfaction and her sorrowful anxiety increased when, the chateau clock striking eleven, she was obliged to give up all hope of seeing the Corinthian before the next day. She had put her children to bed, and felt herself too much fatigued to sit up any longer; but after she had gone to bed she could not sleep, and, yielding to the sad

presentiments which rose confusedly in her mind, she passed a part of the night in weeping and praying.

The Corinthian had torn himself with so much effort from the society of the marchioness at the hour of dinner, that she had promised him that she would return to her chamber as soon as she could escape; and hardly had he himself finished his repast, than he went to wait for her in the secret passage. She pretended a severe headache, in order to leave the saloon early, and returned to lock herself up in her own apartment. There, to please the Corinthian and to make him forget all the bitterness of his jealousy, she conceived the idea of arraying herself in her most beautiful attire for him alone. She had in her wardrobe a carnival disguise which became her wonderfully; it was a ball dress of the last century. She crisped and powdered her hair, which she afterwards ornamented with pearls, flowers, and plumes. She put on a dress with a long waist and farthingales, rich and coquettish to the last degree, and all garnished with ribbons and laces. She did not forget either the high-heeled slippers nor the great fan painted by Bouchon, nor the massive rings on all the fingers, nor the patch above the eyebrow and at the corner of the mouth. As to rouge, she had no need of it; her natural brilliancy would have made it look pale, and an abbe of those times would have said that Love nestled in the dimples of her cheeks. This costume, half sumptuous, half gallant, was singularly appropriate to her height and figure. She dazzled the Corinthian so as to make him crazy. Thus transformed into a marchioness of the Regency, she seemed to him a hundred times more a marchioness than ever; and the thought that so beautiful a woman, so well arrayed, and of so proud a carriage, gave herself to him, a child of the people, obscure, and badly dressed, filled him with a pride which perhaps degenerated somewhat into vanity. This children's play diverted and intoxicated them the whole night. Between them both they did not number forty years. Never had a really serious thought bowed Josephine's beautiful head, and the Corinthian felt within him such an ardour for life, such a need of knowing everything, of feeling everything, and possessing everything, that the grave teachings of the Savinienne and of Pierre Huguenin were effaced from his heart like the fleeting image which a bird reflects in the water as he passes over it in his flight. The marchioness had eaten nothing at dinner, in order to make a pretext for having supper served in her chamber, that she might share the delicate dishes with the Corinthian. She amused herself in arranging this supper, served on silver plate, upon a little table which she ornamented with vases of flowers and a great mirror in the centre, in order that the Corinthian could

see her double and admire her in all her attitudes. Then she hermetically closed the shutters and the curtains of her chamber, lighted the candelabras on the mantel pieces, placed tapers on every side, burnt perfumes, and played the marchioness as much as she could, under pretence of making a parody of the old times. But this play turned to a serious matter. She was too pretty to resemble a caricature; and the refinements of luxury and of voluptuousness too easily insinuated themselves into his artist's organization for the Corinthian to think of satirizing that olden time which was revealed to him, the effeminacy of which appeared to him at this moment more to be regretted than it was revolting. That delightful supper, that night of pleasure, that chamber arranged as a boudoir, that little citizen's daughter disguised as a gallant great lady, struck his imagination a fatal blow. Until then he had artlessly loved Josephine for herself, regretting that she was not a poor, country girl, and cursing the riches and greatness which placed eternal obstacles between them. From this moment he became accustomed to the trifles which composed the life of that woman; he found a piquant attraction in the mystery and danger of his love, and turned his desires without repugnance towards that privileged world in which he dreamed that he would make room for himself. In his transport he swore to the marchioness that she would not long have to blush at her choice, that he would know how to make fly wide open before him the doors of these saloons, the walls of which it had been his destiny to wainscot, and in which he wished to tread upon the carpets and breathe the perfumes, on some day when he should be seen to enter them with head erect and an assured glance. Dreams of ambition and of vain-glory took possession of his brain; the love of Josephine seemed bound to the brilliant future to which he believed himself called; and the remembrance of the Savinienne no longer presented itself to him but as a frightful slavery, as a bond with poverty, sadness, and obscurity.

Thus, at his awaking, he received as the stroke of a poignard the news which Pierre gave him of the mother's arrival and her presence at the chateau. Amaury could have wished to hide himself beneath the earth, but he had to gather resignation, in order to appear before her. He armed himself with courage, assumed a nonchalant air, caressed the children, played with them, and talked of business with the Savinienne, trying, by much zeal and devotedness in her material concerns, to make her forget the freezing coldness of his looks and the forced ease of his manners. While affecting this audacity, the Corinthian thought, in spite of himself, of the roués of the regency, with whom Josephine had entertained

him all night, and he wanted but little of endeavouring to believe himself a marquis. The Savinienne, in a deep stupor, heard him talk of the lodging he intended to seek for her, and the customers he should obtain for the establishment of her business. She let him move and chat around her without answering him, and this silent dejection in which he saw her began to frighten him. He felt his courage vanish, and was seized with a timid respect which did not very well agree with his attempts at presumption.

The Savinienne rose at last, and said to him, as she extended her hand: •

'I thank you my dear son, for the eagerness you manifest to serve me; but you must not let that trouble you. I have no need of assistance for the moment, I have already found friends here who take an interest in me, and my lodging will be quickly procured. Go to your work, I beseech you; the day has begun, and you know that the duty of a good journeyman is punctuality.'

Pierre remained with her a little while after the Corinthian had retired, expecting some burst of her sorrow; but she remained firm and silent, expressed no regret, no doubt, and did not show that she had changed her intentions repecting her establishment at Villepreux.

As soon as Pierre had gone to the workshop, the Savinienne resumed her mourning, which she had laid aside while travelling, arranged her widow's cap with care, put her chamber in order, took her children by the hand, and led them to a maid-servant who promised to carry them to breakfast; then she asked if it would be possible for her to speak with Mademoiselle de Villepreux. After a few minutes, she was introduced into the chamber of the young chatelaine.

Yseult had slept but little. She had just waked, and the first feeling which came to her on opening her eyes was a cruel disenchantment and a secret confusion. But her determination had been taken the day before, and when she was informed that the woman installed by her in the traveller's chamber asked to see her, she resolved to be great and to do nothing by halves.

'Take a seat,' said she to the Savinienne, extending her hand to her, and making her sit down by the side of her bed. 'Are you rested? Did your children sleep well?'

'My children did sleep well, thanks to God and your good heart, mademoiselle,' replied the Savinienne, kissing Yseult's hand with a dignified manner, which prevented the young girl from repelling this act of deference and gratitude.

'I do not come to ask your pardon for not guessing yesterday with whom I was talking: I know you are above that. Neither do I come to lose myself in thanks for your goodness

towards us: I have been told you do not like praises. But I come to you as to a person of great heart and good counsel, to confide to you a sorrow I have.'

'Who then has inspired you with this confidence in me, my dear dame?' said Yseult, making a great effort over herself in order to encourage the Savinienne.

'It is master Pierre Huguenin,' replied the mother of companions with decision.

'Then you spoke to him of me?' returned Yseult trembling.

'We talked of you for more than an hour,' replied the Savinienne, 'and that is why I love you as if I had seen you born."

'Savinienne, you do me great good in saying that," returned Yseult, who, in spite of all her courage, felt a burning tear escape from her eyes. 'When you see master Pierre again, you can tell him that I will be your friend as I am his.'

'I knew that beforehand,' replied the Savinienne; 'for I have come to make a trial of it at once.'

Here the Savinienne related to Yseult her whole story from her marriage with Savinien up to the moment when she left Blois in consequence of the Corinthian's invitation. Then she added:

'I have fatigued you greatly by my recital, my good demoiselle; but you will see that it is a delicate matter, and one on which I could consult only you. In spite of all the esteem I have for master Pierre, I could not understand him last evening; and to-day, I am still far from comprehending what he wishes to explain to me. He tells me that the Corinthian ought to be a sculptor, that for this purpose he must return to apprenticeship; that it is you, Mademoiselle, and Monsieur your father, who wish to send him to Paris: that, for several years, he will earn nothing, and will live upon your benefits. If this be so, the marriage that was projected between us cannot take place; for, if I married the Corinthian next year, I should be a charge to you, and should be so for a long time, as well as my children. Even if you should consent to this, I could not be willing: my children are born free, they must not be brought up in dependence. This was a prejudice which my husband had, and which I shall respect now that he is dead. I have not concealed from Pierre that his friend's project pained me. But doubtless the Corinthian is more attached to that project than to me; for this morning, when I saw him again, he was so constrained and so singular with me that I did not recognize him. He seemed vexed with me that I did not share his illusions. This is the position in which we are. It is a sad one for me, and I am not without remorse for having come here to confide my existence to chance and the caprice of a young man, while I might have

remained at Blois under the protection of a wise and faithful friend who would not have abandoned me for anything in the world. It is, I believe, a crime in a widow, who has children, to listen to her heart in her choice of the man who must protect them. She should consult only her reason and her duty, Yes, I am greatly culpable, I feel it at this hour. But the fault is committed: to recal what I said to Bon-soutien would be a want of dignity, and the mother of Savinien's children must not pass for a trifling and capricious woman; that would some day reflect upon the honour of his daughter. I must therefore endeavour to do the best I can in the unfortunate situation to which I have brought myself. It is for this purpose, and not to weary you with my sorrow, that I have come to consult her whom Pierre Huguenin calls the good angel of broken hearts.'

The Savinienne's recital had taken away the enormous weight which oppressed the heart of Yseult. She felt grateful for the good she had done to her, and at the same time touched by the wisdom and uprightness of this woman, who had no other light in her soul than that of her duty.

'My dear Savinienne,' said she, passing one of her arms around the elegant and solid bust of the woman of the people, 'you ask advice of me, and you appear to me so wise that it seems to me it would be for me to receive it of you every moment of my life. I can give you no information as to what is taking place at the bottom of your Corinthian's heart. It would seem to me impossible that he should not adore such a being as you; and yet I should fear to deceive you did I tell you that this young man will prefer domestic happiness and the peaceful and laborious life of the mechanic to the struggles, sufferings, and triumphs of the artist. We shall talk about him often enough, I hope, for me to succeed in making you comprehend what his genius and his ambition command him to do. I have sometimes conversed on this subject with Pierre, and Pierre will tell you thereupon some excellent things by which he has convinced me, and which decided me to develope the vocation of the sculptor, instead of hindering it.'

The Savinienne opened her eyes very wide, and endeavoured to understand Yseult.

'Then you yourself also had the idea that you might be urging him to his ruin?' said she, with a deep sigh.

'Yes, I did sometimes have it, and I was frightened at the haste my father manifested to draw that child from his condition in order to expose him to all the dangers of Paris, and to all the hazards of an artist's life. It seemed to me that he assumed a grave responsibility, and that, if the Corinthian

did not succeed according to our hopes, we should have rendered him a very sad service.'

'And yet you nevertheless continued to put that into his head?'

'Pierre decided that we had not the right to deprive him of it. Each of us has his peculiar aptness, and bears in himself the germ of his destiny, my good Savinienne. God makes nothing in vain. He has his mysterious and profound views in endowing us with such or such a talent, with such or such a virtue, and, perhaps, with such or such a defect. The instincts of youth are sacred, and no one has the right to smother the flame of genius. On the contrary, it is a duty to excite and to develope it, at the risk of giving to the individual as many sufferings as new faculties.'

'I can hardly believe what you say,' replied the Savienne, 'and I know not how to direct myself in the midst of all this, I was about to tell you that if the Corinthian would be rich, happy, and honoured in his new trade, I was resolved to sacrifice myself, to be silent or to depart; but you tell me that he will suffer, be ruined perhaps, and yet that all this risk must be taken to please God. You are more learned than I, and you speak so woll that I know not how to answer you, except that I do not understand, and that I am very much grieved.'

While saying this the Savinienne began to weep, which was not often the case with her, unless she were alone.

Yseult tried to console her, and besought her not to be precipitate. She persuaded her to establish herself in the village, were it only for a few months, in order to see if the Corinthian, free in his choice and having time for reflection, would not return to love and calm happiness. Yseult was as far as the Savinienne from supposing Amaury's unfaithfulness. The loves of the marchioness were so well protected by the discovery of the secret passage, the Corinthian had so much discretion and prudence in his outward relations with the chateau, that no one had the least suspicion.

The Savinienne therefore resumed courage, and decided to remain: Yseult besought her, in the name of her children, not to be unreasonably proud with her, and at least to keep her chamber in the pavilion of the court; observing to her that she could work for the village at the same time as for the chateau, and that she could not, therefore, be considered in any manner as a domestic. The Savinienne yielded, and remained thus, for the rest of the season, in an almost intimate friendship with Mademoiselle de Villepreux, who did not pass a day without going to talk with her an hour or two, and who gave lessons in writing and arithmetic to her little Manette. This intimacy gave Pierre much more frequent

opportunities to see Yseult, and to become passionately attached to that noble creature. When he saw her seated beside the Savinienne's work-table holding the little boy on her knees and teaching him the alphabet, her who read Montesquieu, Pascal, and Leibnitz in secret, he had to do violence to his feelings not to throw himself on his knees before her. Yseult had indeed a little coquetry with him; she made herself one of the people to please him, tending the Savinienne's chafing dishes, and sometimes taking her flat-iron, when the children called her off, to iron in her stead the bands of the curate or father Huguenin's cravats. Love and republican enthusiasm threw so much poetry upon these prosaic details, that Pierre no longer trod upon the earth, but lived in a kind of mystic fever in which his intellect grew every day, and in which his heart, given up without restraint to all its good instincts was enriched with new strength and ardour to conceive and to desire the good and the beautiful. I assure you, friend reader, that those two platonic lovers exchanged very great words in the square tower, even while thinking they said the most simple things in the world, and that this beautiful society, which you think so well framed, will bend like a work of straw on that day when the logic of great hearts shall bring to bear upon it those eternal truths which you call common-place, and which are agitated every day around certain hearths where you would not deign to seat yourself with a new coat. Before the gothic window of this tower was a great vine, where the pigeons came to play on the edge of the roof. Yseult had tamed them by leaning frequently on the window sill; and while the capuchin, the fantail, or the pouter* came to pick her hand, she often had high revelations respecting perfectibility, and ascended with Pierre, who during this time was at work on an ornament of the wainscotting, even to the loftiest regions of the ideal.

While the resigned Savinienne worked for her children, and retempered her empty and desolate heart in friendship and the religious sentiment, the Corinthian suffered very severe tortures. Always constrained and humiliated at himself in the presence of that noble woman, he went to stifle his remorse in the society of the marchioness; but he no longer found there the same happiness. A profound sadness, an incessant anxiety had taken poseession of Josephine. It seemed to the Corinthian that she concealed from him some secret. The fear of the world reigned over her, in spite of all the maledictions she privately bestowed upon it, and in spite of the vengeance which she thought she took in her hidden pleasures with the man of the people. But, at the least noise

* Different kinds of pigeons.

that was heard, she had in the company of Amaury shud derings or faintings which betrayed shame and fear. He was sometimes indignant at them, at other times he excused them ; but, at the bottom, he would have desired more boldness and confidence in that mistress so fiery in pleasure, so cowardly in reflection. In presence of her fears, the Corinthian felt his pride soften, and he resigned himself to great sacrifices. To avoid the suspicions which her change of character might have occasioned, the marchioness wished to see the world from time to time; and in spite of the humiliations she had there undergone, she did not lose a single opportunity to re-attach herself to it. Her coquetry was every day renewed from its ashes. The Corinthian had great conflicts of anger and tenderness; and in these struggles, it seemed to him that, instead of being reanimated, his heart was wearied and tended to become hardened. His character became embittered ; he avoided Pierre, resisted father Huguenin, and almost despised the other journeymen. The hard habits of poverty began to weigh upon him ; he had no longer any pleasure in sculpturing his wood work, aspiring with anxiety to cut marble and to see models. The good Savinienne remarked with sorrow that he paid much attention to his toilet and acquired habits of carelessness.

'Alas !' said she to Pierre Huguenin, 'he spends all his earnings in buying velvet vests and getting blouses embroidered. When I see him passing in the morning combed and dressed like an image, I no longer ask myself why he arrives last at the workshop.'

As to father Huguenin, he was very much scandalized at the Corinthian's wearing fine boots instead of thick shoes, and he sometimes said to him during supper :

'My boy, when we see the hands of a workman bleach and his nails grow long, we may say it is a bad sign ; for his tools rust and his boards mould.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

M. Isidore Lerebours, the employé aux ponts-et chaussées, had been for some time a fixed inhabitant of the chateau of Villepreux. His father pretended that he had had *some disagreement* with his inspector, and that, *disgusted with the business*, he had given in his resignaton. But the fact was that Isidore's stupidity and ignorance had become insupportable to his chief, that very sharp words had been exchanged between them, and that, in consequence of the report which that discussion had occasioned, he had been dismissed. He was lodged at the chateau, until a new employment could be found for him, and dwelt in the tower which his father occupied at the bottom of the great court, and which was opposite the Savinienne's square tower.

Seeing therefore from his window all that passed there, he was soon convinced that the beautiful widow had no amorous intrigue either with Pierre or with the Corinthian; and, not doubting that his fine clothes and his good looks would produce an effect upon that simple woman who was obliged to work for her living, he ventured to coquet about her. The Savinienne did not at first think of being frightened, and did not feel for him that aversion with which he inspired all the other women of the house. The mother of companions had seen so many and such rough natures growl around her that she was no longer astonished at anything, and moreover did not know that puerile and anticipated fear which is a near neighbour to encouraging coquetry.

Charmed at not being snubbed by her as he was accustomed to be by Julia and the other maids, Isidore thought the Savinienne would be of a better composition, and became so bold with her that he wished to flutter about her in the court when she crossed it in the evening after having carried her linen to the chateau. These attentions were not to the taste of the Savinienne; she threatened to give him a slap, which she would have done as quietly as she said it; but it was written that Isidore should be repressed by a hand somewhat stronger than hers.

One evening, being intoxicated, Isidore saw the Savinienne looking at the foot of the tower for a young pigeon which had fallen down from the nest. He rushed towards her without seeing that Pierre Huguenin was at two paces distance; and he recommenced his rude importunities with expressions so

frivolous and manners so little respectful, that Pierre, indignant, approached and ordered him to withdraw. Isidore, who nevertheless was not brave, but to whom wine gave boldness, wished to insist, and becoming entirely brutal, asserted that he would kiss the Savinienne before the eyes of *her gallant*. 'I am not her gallant,' said Pierre, 'but I am her friend; and to prove it, I will rid her of a fool.' Saying this, he took Isidore by the two shoulders, and, although he retained patience enough not to use all his strength, he threw him against a wall, where the ex-employé rather damaged his face. He held himself satisfied, and knowing thenceforth the workman's arm, he did not boast of his mishap, but he felt all his projects o vengeance return, and his hatred against Pierre Huguenin was rekindled more vividly and with more reason than ever.

He began by attacking the weakest enemy, and by slandering the Savinienne. He confided to everybody in a low voice that the Corinthian and Pierre shared her favours with a cynical contempt for her and for the public morals, and even that the Berrichon was her lover to boot. 'He was very sure of it,' he said, 'he could see from his window everything that happened at night in the square tower.'

Several persons refused to believe this; a greater number believed it without examination and repeated it without scruple. The domestics of the chateau, closely observing the Savinienne's conduct, confidently repelled the calumnies of Isidore, whom, moreover, they cordially detested; and, as they had a great deal of esteem and affection for Pierre, they were careful not to repeat them to him. But they retailed them to the Corinthian, whom they liked much less, because they found him proud, and rather contemptuous towards themselves.

This was a fresh punishment for Amaury, and a new remorse, to see her whom he had loved and had invited to his side, defamed in consequence of him, and defended by another than himself. He swore that young Lerebours should repent it severely, but he was prevented from any action by the jealousy of the marchioness.

Josephine had the custom of conversing in the morning with her maid, while her hair was dressed, and Julia kept her informed of all the tittle-tattle of the servants' hall and of the village. When she learned the suspicions of which the Savinienne was the object, before examining if they were well-founded, she conceived a strange aversion for that victim of her love for the Corinthian. She began by interrogating the latter, and did it with so much bitterness and excitement, that the Corinthian, whose humour was already quite gloomy,

replied to her with some hauteur that he owed her no account of his past life.

'Nevertheless,' added he, 'I will tell you, that you may see how very unfounded your insults are, and how very unjust your jealousy. It is quite true that I have loved the Savinienne, and that I have been loved by her: it is true that I was to have married her at the expiration of her mourning, and that I should have done so had I not met you: it is quite true also that I have broken the most faithful and the most generous heart there ever was, to preserve one which disdains me and escapes from me every moment. But be easy; though I feel my madness, though I am certain of being broken by you some day in my turn, I adore you, and I no longer love the Savinienne. In vain do I blush at my conduct, in vain would I wish to make amends for my crime: the sight of her is a horrible punishment for me, and when Pierre drags me into her company, I count the minutes which I could wish to pass with you.'

'And then,' said the marchioness, shaking her head with an incredulous air, 'that generous and faithful woman, whom you do not even deign to look at, throws herself from despair into the arms of your friend Pierre, and consoles herself with him for your desertion.'

The Corinthian was outraged by this accusation. He would never have thought that wounded vanity could have given to Josephine such evil thoughts and such attacks of wickedness. He had a cruel proof of this; for in his indignation, he warmly defended the Savinienne, and goaded to extremity by the bitter sarcasms of the marchioness, he allowed himself to be carried so far as to depreciate the latter in order to exalt her rival. Then Josephine became furious, had a real nervous attack, and was not appeased until, broken by fatigues, exhausted by tears, she had brought to her feet her lover, distracted and broken like herself.

These storms were renewed the following evening, and were still more violent. Josephine drove the Corinthian from her chamber, and, when he was in the secret passage, she had such fits of sobbing and was so delirious, that he returned to defend her from herself. They were reconciled only to quarrel again; and in those sad convulsions of a love in which faith no longer prevailed, there passed some of these words which kill the ideal, and some of those answers which nothing ca[illegible] efface. The Corinthian, dismayed, asked himself with horr[illegible] if it was love or hate that existed between him and Josephin[illegible]

Until such precautions had been taken by them that [illegible] a breath, not an imprudent sound, had disturbed the sile[illegible] of the young nights in the old chateau. But, in these nig[illegible]

of storm, they trusted too much to the thickness of the walls, and the isolated situation of the apartment. The count, who slept but little and whose slumbers were light, as is the case with all old persons, was struck by stifled cries, dull groans, and bursts of voices suddenly repressed, which seemed to exhale from the massive sides of the walls. The secret passage ran at no great distance from his bed chamber. He knew this, but was ignorant that a communication could be established between that blind passage and the narrower and more mysterious slip which the Corinthian alone had discovered in the wainscotting of the chapel.

The old count had little faith in ghosts. At first he thought of his granddaughter, rose, and approached her apartment, which was situated at the extremity of the corridor, and which had a communication with the workshop through the turret. He heard no voice, entered softly, found Yseult peacefully sleeping, and crossed her chamber to descend the little winding staircase which led to the turret study. During this short passage the strange noises which had struck his ear were no longer heard. But when he had advanced upon the gallery of the chapel, he seemed to find them again.

The count had always been very near sighted, and, to make amends, his hearing was excessively fine and practised. He heard, as through an acoustic tube, two voices which quarrelled, and which seemed to come from a great distance. He examined the sculptures with his eye glass; but the moveable pannel was too far off for him to see the joint. Besides he heard nothing further, and he was about to retire, when he saw the pannel move, slide as into a wing, and the Corinthian, pale, with his hair in disorder, and rage in his eyes, leap from a height of ten feet upon a heap of shavings which he had placed there to break the noise of his daily fall. (He ascended with a ladder which he afterwards threw down upon these same shavings to prevent any suspicion on the part of those who might enter the workshop during the night.)

As soon as the count had seen the pannel move, he had drawn back, and hiding himself behind the tapestry curtain, with his glass he had observed the Corinthian without being perceived. Hardly had the young man retired when the count descended to the workshop, rubbed his crutch in a pot of white lead, and made a mark on the moveable panel that he might recognise it. Then, before daylight, he went to wake Camille, his old valet de-chambre, the smallest, the most brisk, the sharpest, the most crafty, and most discreet of all the valets of past times. Camille took his master-key, and conducted his master by another route to the workshop. He placed the ladder against the designated panel, took his dark lantern, climbed up actively in spite of his seventy years


Q97